South Haven Tribune

$3

August 3, 2025

Short-term rental registration now open

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Applications for licenses under the new short-term rental program in South Haven are now being accepted.

According to a news release, rental property owners within the city's limits who are familiar with the previous rental program can expect a similar application and inspection process.

Property owners will need to apply for and receive a zoning compliance determination before submitting a rental license application.

The new short-term rental ordinance was officially adopted in March, which established a new registration process and regulatory framework. The ordinance also established new zoning requirements for the rentals.

According to the city's website, there are two types of rental licenses:

■ Class I License (Previously known as business)

■ Allow unlimited rental, but not more that two rental stays per seven day period.

■ Must provide proof of $1,000,000 liability insurance at the time of application.

■ Class II License (Previously known as personal)

See **RENTALS**, page A2

Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

The South Haven Regional Business Hub recently appointed Elizabeth Bernhard as the organization's new executive director.

Passionate about partnerships

Bernhard shares her goals for South Haven

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — Southwest Michigan native Elizabeth Bernhard is committed to helping South Haven thrive in her new position as executive director of the South Haven Regional Business Hub.

Originally from a small rural part of Berry County, Bernhard moved to South Haven with her husband in 2019.

She previously worked as executive director of the Manufacturing Growth Alliance and has a passion for workforce development.

Bernhard recently sat down with South Haven Tribune Editor Julie Newell to discuss her life and career.

Where did you go to college?

I went to DePaul University in Chicago and Western Michigan University. I have my master's in communication from Western.

What did you do for a career after college?

I had a pretty non-traditional career pathway. I started off doing seminar facilitation and workshop facilitation and then I moved into executive coaching. I did instruction in higher education at Western and then I was administrator at Kalamazoo Valley Community College and I worked there for several years. I oversaw their veteran's program and their career for continuing education (program). So, all of their community ed programs, I launched that division for the college.

I've been in workforce development for quite a long time in the nonprofit sector. Most recently, I was the executive director of a statewide nonprofit supporting manufacturers.

What got you interested in workforce development?

I am very committed to having communities thrive. Communities thrive when our businesses thrive and when our businesses thrive, our people can thrive. Communities only work if our business and people are thriving. It looks for me, that's really more about creating systems that work for everybody. Having a strong pool of talent that our employers can pull from, but then also having very strong jobs that have people want to live here and grow here.

What drew you to the South Haven Regional Business Hub?

I'm very passionate about South Haven and I'm very passionate about Southwest Michigan. This is an opportunity to really impact the community by supporting our employers and making the South Haven region a place where entrepreneurs can thrive and grow.

I was really drawn to the fact that it's a young organization. We got our start just a few years ago and it seems like a good challenge for me to bring my diverse background, my skills to take this organization to the next level.

Do you have any goals or plans you want to achieve in this position?

South Haven needs to have a strong economy that can be strong year-round. Everybody knows we are a strong economy in the summer, fueled by tourism. That's not just for South Haven; that's for all the regions that we support.

This organization is here to support year-round economic growth. We have extraordinary programs at the hub; we have programs for startups (and) we have programs for seasoned entrepreneurs. So, I'm here to expand the frequency of these program offerings so we can support more entrepreneurs, but also to extend the reach of our programs so that we extend more deeply into Van Buren County as well as into Cass and Berrien County.

Then, also to strengthen our partnerships with our local chamber, our chamber in Kalamazoo in Southwest Michigan. Because we are not just a South Haven organization, it's critical that we have strong partnerships throughout the tri-county area.

I live and breathe partnerships and so I'm here to bring more partnerships to the region so that our community can be positively impacted from them.

Do you have any hobbies, hidden talents or favorite activities?

I am a member of the CrossFit South Haven gym here and I'm also a runner. I love to compete in 5Ks.

See **BERNHARD**, page A6

Surf Internet work begins north of Black River

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Surf Internet construction recently began on the north side of Black River in South Haven and will continue through September.

According to a news release, restoration is expected to occur in tandem with construction, weather pending.

The first work area will be between Dyckman Avenue and Oak Street and is expected to occur between July 28 and Aug. 22.

The second work area will be between Oak Street and Baseline Road and is expected to occur between Aug. 25 and Sept. 19.

Work will be contained within the road right-of-way for the project.

"Road traffic should be minimally impacted," the release stated. "At times, pedestrian traffic may be temporarily impeded due to utility spotting."

For more information, questions or concerns contact Bella Haberski at 269-637-0776 or via email at bhaberski@southhavenmi.gov.

Trump tax cut law blows $1.1B 'hole' in Michigan budget, new report warns

By CRAIG MAUGER
The Detroit News (TNS)

A new $1 billion financial hit, spurred by a tax law signed by President Donald Trump, is poised to complicate Michigan lawmakers' mission of crafting a state budget and avoiding a government shutdown, suggests a new report from a nonpartisan research group.

The 13-page analysis from the Citizens Research Council of Michigan, released Wednesday, determined the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) would immediately have "a major impact" on the state's budget for the next fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

The report echoed findings from the nonpartisan Michigan House Fiscal Agency, which stated last week that changes to federal tax policy would result in a $677 million reduction in state business tax revenue next year.

On top of that number, the Citizens Research Council said legislators will likely need to find $450 million in General Fund money to offset the elimination, by the federal government, of a state tax on health insurers that's been used to support the state's Medicaid program, which provides health coverage for low-income residents.

"Regardless of the eventual outcome, all parties need to recognize that the OBBBA will bring a new $1 billion challenge to these discussions," the Citizens Research Council report said.

In February, Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer kicked off the budget negotiations in Lansing by proposing an $83.5 billion spending plan for the next fiscal year. The Democratic-controlled Senate passed its own full $84.6 billion state budget proposal in mid-May.

However, the Republican-led House has approved only a budget plan for schools, universities and community colleges, leaving questions lingering about its ideas for funding state agencies and road projects. House Speaker Matt Hall, R-Richland Township, has called for diverting about $3 billion in existing revenues to improving the state's transportation infrastructure.

Trump signed the federal bill that features an array of tax breaks and spending cuts into law on July 4. The White House said the policy represented "a once-in-a-generation piece of legislation."

"The one big beautiful deal is all about growth," Trump said in a post on social media on July 2. "If passed, America will have an economic renaissance like never before."

To offset the tax cuts, the federal legislation will mandate increases in state-level payments toward Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides food aid to needy residents. The changes could increase Michigan's spending on these programs by over $1 billion by fiscal year 2032, according to the Citizens Research Council.

In the near term, the policy creates "a $1.1 billion hole" in the budget plan the governor recommended in February, the Citizens Research Council's report found.

That hole is being partially driven by tax changes that benefit businesses in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which will have ripple effects on Michigan's corporate income tax collections, according to the nonprofit.

As one example, the federal law includes a provision that allows firms to immediately deduct domestic research and experimental expenditures, according to the House Fiscal Agency. For next year, that change represents $449 million of $677 million in lost state-level business tax revenue, according to the agency.

Meanwhile, the Citizens Research Council said state lawmakers should hold back $450 million in ongoing General Fund revenue to recognize the likely need to address the loss of the state's Insurance Provider Assessment. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act takes aim at provider taxes designed to leverage additional federal funding to boost Medicaid reimbursement rates, the nonprofit said, adding that a proposed federal rule would also "immediately prohibit Michigan from assessing the IPA."

The only alternative to shifting General Fund money for the loss of the provider assessment would be to absorb a $1.5 billion hit to the Medicaid program, representing the $450 million in assessment revenue plus roughly $1 billion in federal dollars that it leverages, the Citizens Research Council said.

Even before the federal changes, the House and Senate were at an apparent stalemate in their budget negotiations. They missed their self-imposed July 1 deadline to approve a budget, and last week, Hall unilaterally removed the top House Democrat on the appropriations committee, Rep. Alabas Farhat, D-Dearborn, from his position.

Now, they have until Oct. 1, when the next fiscal year begins, to avert some level of state government shutdown.

House Appropriations Chairwoman Ann Bollin, R-Brighton Township, said House Republicans anticipated there would be impacts on the state budget from federal tax law changes and she was still optimistic a compromise could be reached. But she acknowledged that the repercussions made the process

See **TAX CUT**, page A6

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 126th Year

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Support the Local Businesses Who Help Support Our Community!

OBITUARIES

Wayne Dalrymple

Aug. 20, 1970 – July 29, 2025

Wayne Brent Dalrymple passed away on July 29, 2025 in South Haven, Mich. He was 54 years and 11 months old.

He was born on Aug. 20, 1970 to Les and Karen E. Dalrymple of South Haven.

He graduated from South Haven High School and lived in South Haven until the day of his passing.

On October 9th, 1995 Wayne was involved in a car accident which left him paralyzed from the waist down and with a severe brain injury.

He lived in South Haven with his parents who cared for him in their home, until his passing.

Wayne made his decision to make Jesus his foundation in life when he was 11 years old. Wayne never lost his faith and belief in God with a living hope and an unending love for God.

Wayne loved music and could be seen and heard often playing his keyboard. He liked to play his music softly. He was gifted with the talent of being able to play by ear. He started to play the piano when he was around three years old.

Wayne was often seen downtown in his motorized scooter. He loved people, being outside, striking conversation with a friendly smile and sharing a laugh with the citizens of South Haven.

Despite Wayne's condition, he was usually upbeat and friendly. Quick to share a laugh, play a game and enjoy others company. Even though his body was limited, Wayne did everything he could to connect and love others. His strength was not in the absence of suffering; it was in his refusal to let that suffering define everything about him.

Cherie Thompson, Wayne's niece of Hastings, Mich. was his caregiver for many years. Wayne loved his family and shared much joy with his parents, siblings, children, nieces and nephews.

Wayne is survived by his two sons, Kent of Bangor Mich., and David of Watervliet, Mich.

Also surviving are his parents of South Haven; an older brother, Rocky (Karen K) of Brighten, Mich.; a sister, Tracey of South Haven and many nieces and nephews.

Visitation for Wayne will take place from 1 p.m. until the time of the funeral service at 2 p.m. on Aug. 3 at Filbrandt Chapel Funeral Home 1076 S. Bailey Ave, South Haven Michigan, 49090.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence, go to www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269.637-0333.

Michele Remley

July 4, 1969 – July 16, 2025

Michele "Shelley" Allanette Remley, 56, of South Haven, Mich. passed away on Wednesday, July 16, 2025.

Michele was born on July 4, 1969, in South Haven to the late Allen G. and Mary Jane (Wasegesic) Remley.

Shelley is survived by her fiance; Julius Franklin and mother; Mary. Also surviving are her sisters; Lisa Remley Keller and Theresa Stieve.

A celebration of life service will take place at 1 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 1 at Filbrandt Chapel, 1076 S. Bailey Ave, South Haven. Pastor Gary Guthrie will officiate.

Those wishing to leave Shelley an online condolence may do so at www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel of Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services, 269-637-0333.

David Snyder

Sept. 22, 1943 – July 16, 2025

David Lee Snyder, age 81, passed away peacefully at his home in Kalamazoo, Mich., on July 16, 2025.

David was born on Sept. 22, 1943, in South Haven, Mich. to the late Joseph Snyder and Virginia (Bridges) Snyder Braschler.

On May 4, 1968, he married the love of his life, Janet Hotelling and together they shared 57 wonderful years of marriage.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his stepfather, George Braschler; his brother, Dennis Snyder; stepbrother, Don (Joyce) Braschler and stepsister, Barbara (Braschler) (Roy) Gaddy.

David is survived by his beloved wife, Janet; daughter, Jennifer (Anand) Sankey of Kalamazoo; son, Joseph Snyder of Kalamazoo; granddaughter, Anna Sankey; grandsons, Joshua and Josef Snyder and stepbrother, Bob (Nancy) Braschler.

He is also remembered fondly by many cousins from the Bridges family and extended family from his mother's second marriage.

A celebration of life will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 23, at Oshtemo United Methodist Church, 6574 Stadium Dr., Kalamazoo, MI. A luncheon will follow the service.

Visitation will take place the evening before from 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 22 at the same location.

To share a memory or leave a condolence, go to www.langelands.com.

Edward Eggers

Nov. 15, 1945 – July 27, 2025

Ed Eggers, 79, of South Haven, Mich., died on July 27, 2025 in Spruce Pine, N.C.

He was born in South Haven in 1945 to Fannie (Robinson) and George Eggers.

Ed was a hardworking, talented man who could fix or build anything.

He was also an entrepreneur who owned Ed's Arco Station and was the "E" in E and H Auto. Following that, he was the service manager at Woodhams Ford for 30 years. For the past 12 years, he worked part time at Ingles gas station in North Carolina.

Ed was a good, kind, and generous man.

Throughout the years, Ed enjoyed many pastimes including woodworking, guns, stained glass, reading mystery novels, driving his green jeep and anything to do with old cars.

He liked keeping an immaculate yard, built an extensive model train city and loved his dog Lexi.

Ed is survived by his wife Mona (Dodd), daughter Cheri (Gary) Hansen, son Edward (Rich) Richard Eggers, Jr., three grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

He and Mona recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. He will be very greatly missed.

Per his wishes, cremation has taken place and there will be no service. If desired, donations can be made to any animal shelter or hospice.

Clinton Wiseman

Oct. 15, 1968 – July 26, 2025

Clinton Wiseman, known to most as Clint, passed away at home in Milford on July 26, 2025, at the age of 56.

He was born on Oct. 15, 1968 to Emory Clinton Wiseman and Betty (Dailey) Hitchcock in South Haven, Mich.

From an early age, he understood the value of hard work and he dedicated many years in the automotive industry.

Clint is remembered for his larger-than-life personality and he will be remembered as strong willed and independent.

Clint's interests extended beyond his professional endeavors. He found joy in collecting antiques, deer hunting and playing poker.

He is survived by three children: Bishop Clinton Wiseman of Milford, Macy Wiseman of South Bend and Trinity Wiseman of South Bend. He also leaves behind his beloved grandson, Kingston Wiseman.

In addition, Clint is remembered by his sister, Jenny Wiseman of Alto, Mich.; his mother, Betty Hitchcock of Nappanee; and by his loving companion of over 20 years, Rhonda Thrasher and her daughter, Michelle Thrasher.

He was preceded in death by his father, Emory Clinton Wiseman.

Titus Funeral Homes and Cremation Services, 1001 South Huntington Street, Syracuse is entrusted with care of Clint. The family is grieving privately.

Obituary policy

We publish obituaries submitted by the funeral home in charge of arrangements. For information, call 269-637-1104.

RENTALS

From page A1

■ Allow for six rental terms or 28 days of rental per calendar year.

■ Must provide rental dates to STR Program Coordinator prior to the date guests arrive.

Any rentals registered under the old ordinance will have an expiration date of May 1, 2026. No rentals can be registered under the old ordinance on or after that date.

All rentals registered under the new ordinance will be valid for two years from the date of issue on the license.

Under the new ordinance, inspections are now required every two years.

A fee schedule was approved by the South Haven City Council during the July 27 meeting.

Some of the fees include:

■ $900 for initial zoning compliance determination.

■ $450 for application and inspection fees for class one rentals.

■ $250 for application and inspection fees for class two rentals.

■ $750 for a two-year licensing fee for class one rentals.

■ $250 for a two-year licensing fee for class two rentals.

Applications, fee schedules and other related information are available online at www.sohami.com/STR.

For additional questions, contact Program Coordinator Megan Blodgett at 269-637-0791 or via email at mblodgett@southhavenmi.gov.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Al-Van Humane Society
Adopt ♥ Volunteer ♥ Donate ♥ Advocate
73303 8th Ave. PO Box 421 South Haven, MI 49090
phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pet of the Week, Dusk!

Dusk is a sweetheart through and through. At 2 years old, this handsome pup came to us as a stray and was heartworm positive. He has been undergoing treatment like a champ though! He still has one more check-up in about a month, and we're hopeful he'll be cleared and ready to start his next chapter. In the meantime, he's available for foster-to-adopt, giving someone the chance to get to know him while he finishes healing. Dusk recently went on a Furry Getaway foster trip and spent a weekend with one of our loving fosters. His foster mom said he has been an absolute dream! She said he was an easygoing and polite house guest. He enjoys relaxing, going for walks, playing with toys, and politely watching you cook. He's gentle, affectionate, and shaping up to be a truly wonderful companion. To learn more about Dusk visit us at al-van.org/adopt.

Bark-B-Que

Save the date! Al-Van's annual Bark-B-Que is happening August 8th at the Huron Street Pavilion starting at 4 p.m. For just $15, you'll get a great meal including a pulled pork sandwich or vegetarian burger, vegetarian baked beans, chips, ice cream with blueberries, and a beverage. Kick back and enjoy the musical talents of LaSoulfulRock and support all the furry friends here at Al-Van.

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST

WET DOG FOOD

You can view our full wishlist at al-van.org/wishlist. All donations can be dropped off at our adoption center or Rescued Treasures (07591 Blue Star Highway, South Haven, MI 49090) during open hours, or shipped directly from our Amazon or Chewy wish lists Thank you so much for your support, the doggos, kittens and humans here at Al-Van really appreciate you!

www.southhaven tribune.net

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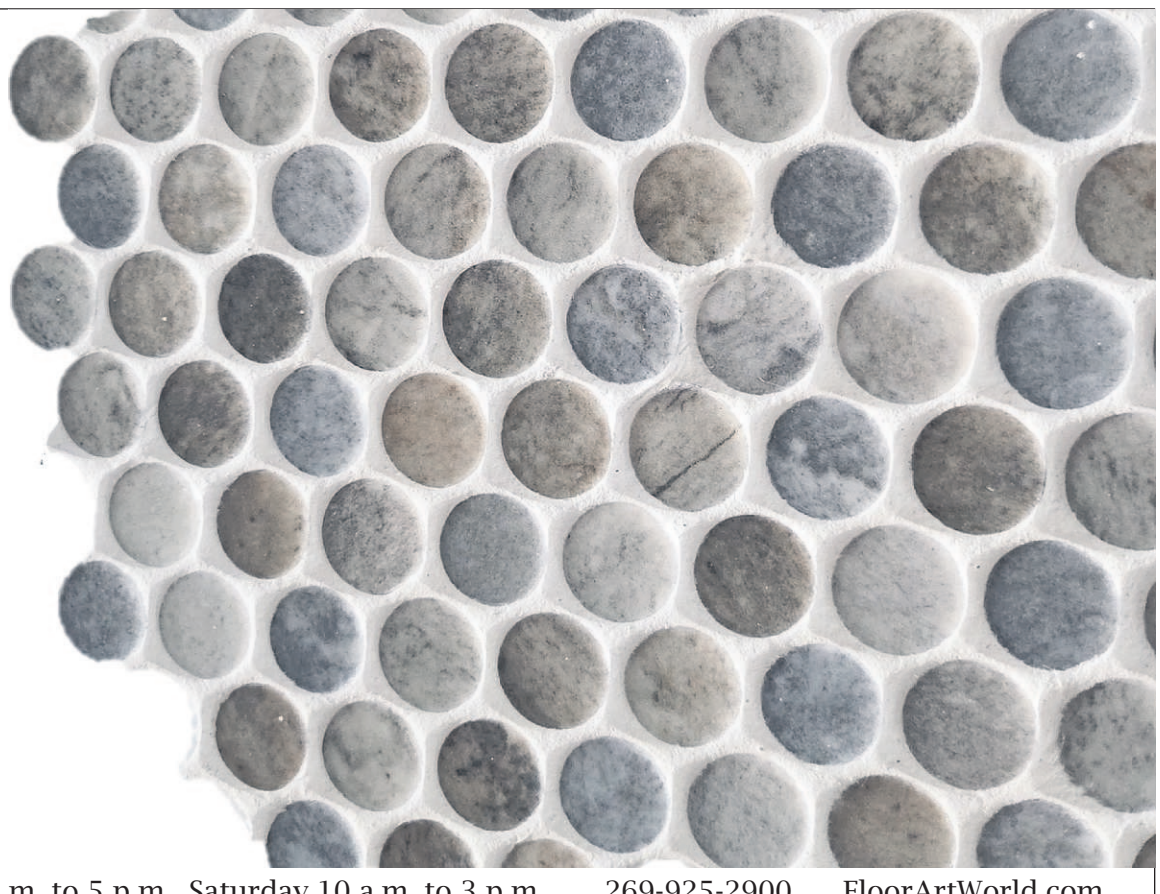

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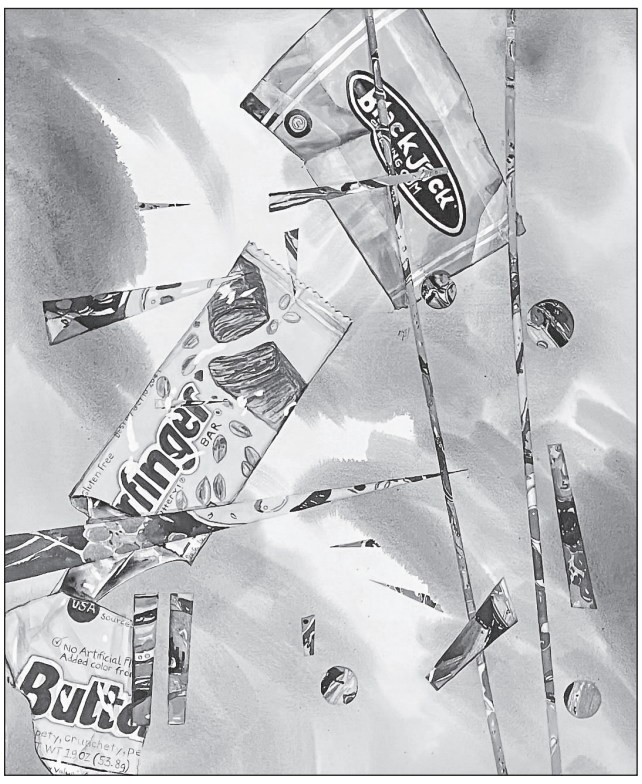


"Artwork" by South Haven artist Robin Reva is one example of her work that will be featured in the new exhibition "Altered Consumerism."

SH to feature four Michigan artists

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Center for the Arts will feature four Michigan artists in the new "Altered Consumerism" exhibition.

According to a news release, the art center will host an opening reception from 5 to 7 p.m. on Aug. 8. The exhibition will run through Sept. 20.

This group exhibition features Robin Reva, James Palmore, Mary Hammer and James Gordan Jackson – four artists whose creative dialogue spans more than 40 years.

"Altered Consumerism brings together the artist's individual and collective explorations of environmental consciousness, transformation and material reuse," the release stated.

Working with recycled and repurposed materials, the artists engage in a conversation about sustainability and the evolving relationship between humans and the natural world.

"Their work weaves together a visual narrative of reflection, resilience and regeneration, pushing the boundaries of conventional media while remaining rooted in a deep concern for our environment," the release stated.

Reva, of South Haven, is a mixed-media artist, former gallery owner and experienced educator whose career spans fine art, custom framing and arts advocacy.

She pinpoints the start of her art career at an early age from reading a Ford Times Magazine subscription.

"It was filled front to back with a variety of reproductions from artists," Reva said. "I waited each month to see what artists were doing. I would sit on my bedroom floor and recreate some styles and concepts starting with a cheap set of watercolors. I thought the watercolor illustrations were emotional and that was what I wanted to learn."

Hammer's work explores texture, transformation and storytelling through acrylic, watercolor and found materials.

Her art has exhibited throughout Michigan including at the South Haven Center for the Arts and Ted Dickerson Studio.

Hammer was born in Jackson, Mich. and has been an artist all her life.

"She remembers an early time when for some reason she wanted to paint a picture of tulips but did not have the materials to do so," the release stated. "Hammer found the flowers in her own yard and proceeded to paint using the colors the pedals bore by rubbing red, yellow and blue into the paper creating her own three flowers from the actual flower petals."

The art medium was the juice from the actual petals from the plants. The piece was entitled "Faith, Hope and Charity" and she was eight years old when she created it.

"This creation was a defining moment that led to a lifelong adventure of innovation," the release stated.

Palmore, a longtime Kalamazoo artist and community advocate, has dedicated over five decades to creative work across painting, theatre design, youth mentorship and cultural organizing.

Palmore's art practice is intertwined with social impact, environmental stewardship and intergenerational learning.

"His early artistic awakening came after military service, eventually leading to co-founding several arts organizations, including the Black Civic Theater and the Black Arts and Cultural Center," the release stated.

Jackson discovered his love of sculpting while studying metallurgy at Ferris State University by learning the technical aspects behind the goal of becoming a full-time artist.

"Even as a child I could sense gracefulness and magnificence in the basest of materials," Jackson said in the release. "In art, I use the integrity of the materials I am working with to draw the beauty within those materials out of those items so that the line, shape, texture and color are more evident to others."

Jackson has a lifetime of experience and involvement in varied artistic and design endeavors and has exhibited many times throughout Michigan.

"Part of a sculpture's beauty is the purpose," Jackson said in the release. "If the purpose is to convey love, then love is what should be softly and delicately drawn out of the materials. If the purpose is anger, then every angle and every curve of that material should emit anger. If this type of work is done using appropriate materials in an appropriate way, and not forced upon, it does not disturb or bother the eye or nature."

The South Haven Center for the Arts, located at 600 Phoenix Street, South Haven, is free and open to the public.

The center is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday.

For more information, go to southhavenarts.org or southhavenarts on Facebook and Instagram.

To contact the center directly, email info@southhavenarts.org or call 269-637-1041.

Photos provided

"You Go Girl " by Mary Hammer depicting a stylized woman with closed eyes will be displayed in a new exhibition at The South Haven Center for the Arts.

James Gordan Jackson's piece entitled "Future" is an example of the love for sculpting he discovered while studying metallurgy in college.

Kalamazoo artist James Palmore's piece "Why Me" features a pile of worn wood planks and metal scraps, arranged on a dark board dotted with nails.

Construction begins for Lakeshore Trail

Berrien County trail along M-63 to connect to South Haven

By LOUISE WREGE
For the Tribune

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Construction started recently on the long-awaited Lakeshore Trail along M-63 in Benton Township.

"A lot of people are excited about continuing the trail along the lakeshore," said Marcy Hamilton, advisor to the Friends of Berrien County Trails board. "This is a really big project. We wanted to let people know we are making progress."

She said this 2.5-mile section of the walking and biking trail will connect to the existing Harbor Shores Trails at Higman Park Road and will continue north to the Monte Road trailhead of the Lakeview Mountain Bike Trail just north of the Whirlpool Corp. Global Headquarters.

She said the shoulder of the road along M-63 will be closed during construction, so cyclists are urged to use caution along that road.

Jason Marquardt from Abonmarche said they started construction Monday at the intersection of M-63 and Enterprise Way and will head north.

He said the trail between Higman Park Road and Enterprise Way goes past Holes 10 and 11 of the Harbor Shores Golf Club.

"We're not working next to the golf course during heavy summer months," Marquardt said.

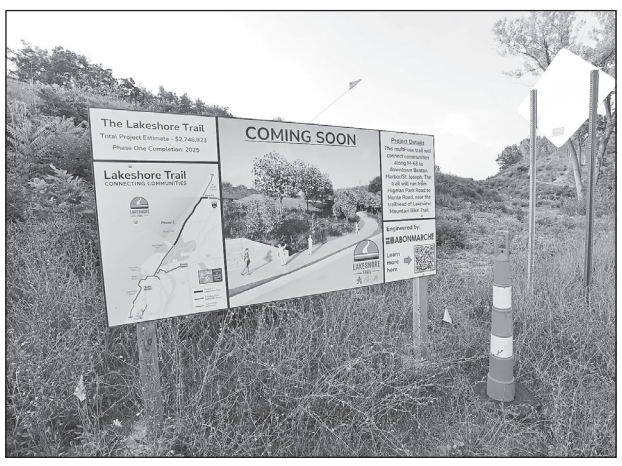
He said they will start construction on that section of the trail in the fall.

Hamilton said the trail will eventually connect with trails in Van Buren State Park in Covert Township in Van Buren County to the north, and to existing trails in New Buffalo to the south.

The trail is expected to be done by the end of the year, with a grand opening to be celebrated in the spring, Hamilton said.

The new trail has been funded through a mix of grants, private donations and fundraising events held by the Friends of Berrien County Trails, including a crowdfunding campaign this spring to help the project receive a $75,000 matching grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corp.

Information about this and future trails can be found at www.berrientrails.org.



Don Campbell / For the Tribune

Work began recently on Phase 1 of the Lakeshore Trail along M-63, north of St. Joseph. The trail is expected to go into Van Buren County.

Map provided / Friends of Berrien County Trails

SH to feature Winston Churchill show

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Theatre Series invites the community to be taken back in time in the multimedia presentation "WINSTON CHURCHILL: The Blitz."

According to a news release, the performance stars Randy Otto and will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Aug. 16 in Listiak Auditorium, 600 Elkenburg St.

"Randy Otto transports the audience to a London rooftop, where Churchill heroically leads his country to victory in the face of the terrifying German bombing of London," the release stated.

The performance will take the audience through the one of the autumn nights of the 1940 German bombing of London.

"Never have so many been so inspired by one man heroically leading the British people to victory," the release stated.

Churchill's great-grandson Jonathan Sandys praised Otto's performance in the release.

"I have heard many people attempt to play the role of my great-grandfather, but without hesitation, Randy Otto takes the role to a whole new level," Sandys said in the release. "Randy does not attempt to be Winston Churchill; Randy IS Winston Churchill."

The show includes a multimedia presentation of period film, photos, sound and lighting effects and pigeons.

The show will also include a British music hall sing-along and an interactive question and answer time.

This performance has been supported by a grant from the South Haven Area Community Foundation.

Tickets are $15 for adults and free for children and students.

For more information and to purchase tickets online, go to www.southhaventheatreseries.org.

Cone with a cop event promotes bike safety

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Safe Kids Greater South Haven recently donated 38 bike helmets in support of the first "Cone with a Cop" event and to promote bike safety in the community.

According to a news release, the "Cone with a Cop" event was hosted by the South Haven Police Department and McDonald's.

The event gave kids the chance to meet South Haven police officers and have their photos taken in a police car, while enjoying a free ice cream cone and picking up a properly fitted bike helmet.

"We're proud to partner with Safe Kids Greater South Haven to help protect kids in our community," Interim Police Chief Adam DeBoer said in the release. "A helmet can make all the difference in preventing serious injuries and we want to make sure every child has one."

Safe Kids Greater South Haven is a local coalition led by Bronson South Haven Hospital and supported by the Bronson Health Foundation.

"Made up of community leaders and first responders, Safe Kids Greater South Haven works year-round to help keep kids safe by offering educational resources and hosting hands-on events like car seat safety checks and fire safety workshops," the release stated.

The coalition is part of Safe Kids Worldwide, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing unintentional injuries in children.

To learn more about Safe Kids Greater South Haven go to bronsonhealth.us/safe-kids-greater-south-haven.

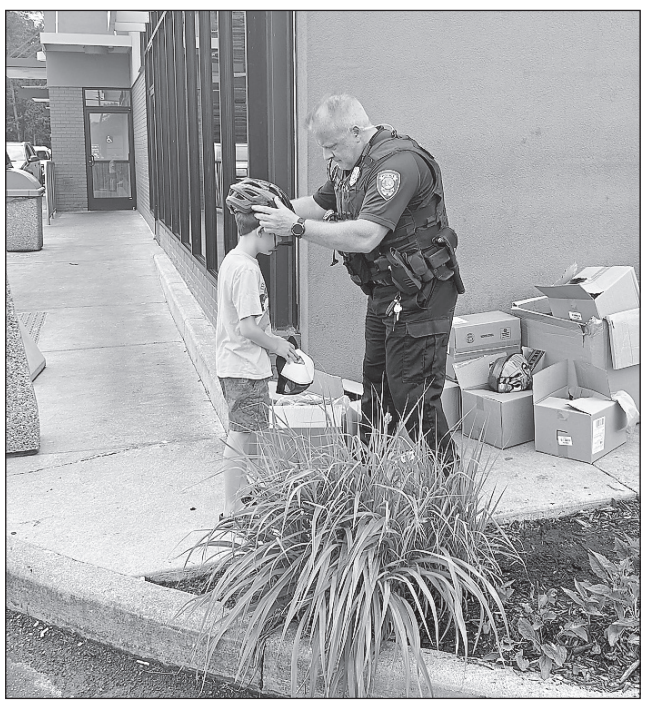


Photo provided

The South Haven Police Department recently partnered with McDonald's and Safe Kids Greater South Haven to promote bike safety.

Lightning strikes South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven Area Emergency Services responded to Park Meadows Apartments after lightning struck one of the buildings during a recent thunderstorm.

According to a news release, residents reported a smell of smoke after lightning appeared to have struck one of the six buildings.

"There was no fire, but the force of the lightning strike ruptured a natural gas line and set off the water sprinkler system in one of the apartments," the release stated.

Residents safely evacuated and no injuries were reported in the release.

ABOVE: South Haven Area Emergency Services responded to Park Meadows Apartments after lightning struck one of the buildings during a recent thunderstorm. **RIGHT:** Lightning struck one of the buildings at Park Meadows Apartments in South Haven, rupturing a natural gas line and setting off the sprinkler system.

Photos provided / Tom Renner

Two craft fairs to return to South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce is gearing up to host two craft fairs in August.

According to a news release, the 40th Annual Blueberry Festival Craft Fair will take place on Aug. 9 and 10 and the All Crafts Fair on August 30 and 31.

"Both fairs are juried, ensuring a high-quality selection of handmade items and will take place in the picturesque Stanley Johnston Park, just north of downtown South Haven," the release stated.

The Blueberry Festival Craft Fair is held in conjunction with the National Blueberry Festival and features 175 vendors offering a wide range of handcrafted goods including jewelry, pottery, woodwork, art and home décor.

Photo provided

The Blueberry Festival Craft Fair and The All Crafts Fair return in August to bring a variety of handmade creations and vendors to South Haven.

The event runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Aug. 9 and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Aug. 10

The All Crafts Fair returns for Labor Day weekend, with over 150 artists and makers bringing their original, handmade creations to South Haven.

This show takes place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Aug. 30 and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Aug. 31.

"We love seeing the park filled with people discovering unique finds and supporting small businesses and artisans," Assistant Director of the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce Olivia Thompson said in the release.

Free shuttle parking will be available for both events from North Shore Elementary School. This service helps alleviate downtown congestion and ensures convenient access for visitors.

Each event will also feature a selection of food trucks offering a variety of food, including wood-fired pizza, Greek cuisine, Mexican street food, Culver's ice cream and a craft soda truck.

Both fairs are free to attend and are held outdoors. Public parking is available nearby and the park's location offers easy access to South Haven's shops, restaurants and waterfront attractions.

"These craft fairs bring such great energy to South Haven," Thompson said in the release. "With talented artists, amazing food trucks and a free parking shuttle, it's an easy and enjoyable way to spend the weekend."

For more information, go to www.southhavenmi.com or the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce Facebook page.

Re-paving begins on Red Arrow Highway

By TRIBUNE STAFF

LAWRENCE — The Van Buren County Road Commission began re-paving work this week along Red Arrow Highway.

According to a news release, the project will take place from CR 681 West to the Hartford city limits and cost $1,136,935.00.

The project is being handled by Michigan Paving and Materials Company and involves milling the existing asphalt surface and re-paving the roadway.

"One lane of traffic will remain open throughout the duration of the project, which is expected to take approximately four weeks including final restoration," the release stated.

Flaggers will be stationed to assist motorists and ensure safe, efficient traffic flow through the work zone.

Managing Director Bret Witkowski thanked the motoring public in the release for their patience and cooperation while this work is being accomplished.

"We are confident you will find that the long-term benefit of this road improvement project will outweigh any temporary inconvenience you may experience," Witkowski said in the release.

For questions about the project, contact the Van Buren County Road Commission by phone at 269-674-8011 or by email at vbcrc@vbcrc.org.

Michigan program that gives new moms cash could be a model for other states

By ISABELLA VOLMERT
Associated Press

FLINT — A procession of mothers wearing red sashes, pushing strollers and tending to toddlers made their way Friday to a little festival in Flint, Michigan, where families received diapers and kids played.

It was called a "baby parade."

The sashes indicated the women were participants of a growing program in Michigan that helps pregnant women and new moms by giving them cash over the first year of their children's lives. Launched in 2024, the program comes at a time when many voters worry over high child care costs and President Donald Trump's administration floats policy to reverse the declining birth rate.

Backed by a mix of state, local and philanthropic money, Rx Kids gives mothers of newborns up to $7,500, with no income requirements and no rules for how the money is spent. Supporters believe the program could be a model for mitigating the high cost of having children in the U.S.

"There's all kinds of reasons, no matter what your political affiliation or ideology is, to support this," said state Sen. John Damoose, a Republican and ardent supporter of the program.

How the program works

To qualify, women need to prove they live in a participating location and that they are pregnant, but don't have to share details about their income.

It's designed to be simple.

Pregnant women receive $1,500 before delivery and $500 every month for the first six to 12 months of their babies' lives, depending on the program location.

Dr. Mona Hanna, a pediatrician, associate dean for public health at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and the program's founding director, said that window is a time of great economic vulnerability for new parents – and a critical developmental period for babies.

Most participants need diapers, formula, breast feeding supplies and baby clothes but every family's needs are different. The monthly payment can also help buy food and cover rent, utilities and transportation.

For some moms, the extra cash allows them to afford child care and return to work. For others, it allows them to stay home longer.

The program so far is available in Flint, Pontiac, Kalamazoo and five counties in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. By fall, it will expand to a rural central Michigan county and several cities near Detroit.

Hanna said the main piece of feedback she hears is that the program should be bigger. She's heard from lawmakers and others hoping to start similar programs in other states.

What's the impact

Hanna said the program's data shows nearly all pregnant women in Flint have signed up since it became available.

The locations were designed to target low-income families, though there is no income requirement. Luke Shaefer, a professor of public policy at the University of Michigan and a co-founder of Rx Kids, said they wanted to eliminate any stigma or barriers that discourage people from signing up.

The founders also want mothers to feel celebrated, hence the parade Friday.

"For so long moms have been vilified and not supported," Hanna said.

Friends told Angela Sintery, 44, about Rx Kids when she found out she was pregnant with her second child. She's a preschool teacher who spread the word to other parents.

Sintery had her first daughter 19 years before her second and had to buy all new baby supplies.

She said the cash provided by Rx Kids would have been helpful when she had her first child at age 24, before she went to college.

"So this time around, I didn't have to stress about anything. I just had to worry about my baby," she said.

Celeste Lord-Timlin, a Flint resident and program participant, attended the baby parade with her husband and 13-month-old daughter by her side. She said the deposits helped her pay for graduate school while she was pregnant.

"It allowed us to really enjoy being new parents," she said.

Changing the conversation

The program relies heavily on philanthropic donations but Hanna's long-term goal is for the government to be the main provider.

"I see philanthropy as the doula of this program, they are helping birth it," she said. "They are helping us prove that this is possible."

Democrats in Michigan's state Senate introduced legislation in February that would make the program available to any pregnant woman in the state and it has bipartisan support. But with a divided Legislature only able to pass six bills total this year, it's unlikely the program will yet expand statewide soon.

Even Damoose, among the program's top backers, said he doesn't think Michigan can afford statewide expansion yet. But the lawmaker who represents parts of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan does want to keep growing it.

For fellow Republicans who oppose abortion as he does, the approach is a "no brainer" way to help pregnant women, Damoose said.

"We've been accused for years and years, and not without cause, of being pro-birth, but not pro-life," he said. "And this is a way for us to put our money where our mouth is."

The cost of kids

A new movement of pro-natalist political figures, including Vice President JD Vance, Elon Musk and other members of Trump's periphery, have harped on the country's declining birth rate.

But a recent Associated Press-NORC poll found that most Americans want the government to focus on the high costs of child care – not just the number of babies being born here.

Under Trump's tax and spending bill that Congress passed in July, the child tax credit is boosted from $2,000 child tax credit to $2,200. But millions of families at lower income levels will not get the full credit.

The bill will also create a new children's saving program, called Trump Accounts, with a potential $1,000 deposit from the Treasury.

That's not available until children grow up and is more focused on building wealth rather than immediate relief, Hanna said.

"We don't have that social infrastructure to invest in our families," Hanna said. "No wonder people aren't having children and our birth rates are going down."

The Trump administration has also toyed with the idea of giving families one-time $5,000 "baby bonuses," a policy similar to Rx Kids.

Critics have rightly pointed out that doesn't come close to covering the cost of child care or other expenses. Defenders of a cash-in-hand approach, though, say any amount can help in those critical early months.

"I think it's part of a new narrative or the rekindling of an old narrative where we start to celebrate children and families," said Damoose.

South Haven Tribune

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0900 LEGALS

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR MSHDA'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) FUNDING FOR THE COVERT TOWNSHIP HOME REHAB PROJECT

Covert Township will conduct a public hearing on August 12, 2025 at 6:00PM at 73943 E. Lake Street, Covert, MI 49043 for the purpose of affording citizens an opportunity to examine and submit comments on the proposed application for a MSHDA CDBG grant.

Covert Township proposes to use $400,000 CDBG funds for repairs and improvements to homes located within the Township and occupied by low and moderate-income homeowners to address health, safety and energy efficiency needs. The project will benefit at least 51% low to moderate income persons. Zero persons will be displaced as a result of the proposed activities.

Interested parties are invited to comment on the proposed project during the above listed public hearing or in advance of the hearing in writing. To submit written comments in advance of the meeting, contact Township Clerk at clerk@coverttwp.com or 269-764-8986 ext. 2 no later than 10 a.m. on August 5, 2025. Alternatively, comments may be submitted in writing to the Township Clerk at 73943 E. Lake Street, Covert, MI 49043.

If you are disabled and require reasonable accommodation for this meeting, contact the Township Clerk at least two business days before the meeting in writing at 73943 E. Lake Street, Covert, MI 49043 or by telephone at 269-764-8986 ext. 2.

Daywi Cook
Township Supervisor
Covert Township

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF VAN BUREN

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate & Trust

Estate and Trust of
Fraya K. Fritsche
Date of Birth: April 6, 1943

NOTICE TO ALL CREDITORS: The decedent, Fraya K. Fritsche, who lived at 706 Kentucky Avenue, Apt. 24 South Haven, MI died June 26, 2025.

Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the Estate of Fraya K. Fritsche and the Fraya K. Fritsche Trust dated April 22, 1992, as amended, will be forever barred unless presented to:

Charles L. Fritsche, Trustee of the Fraya K. Fritsche Trust dated April 22, 1992, as amended and/or Charles L. Fritsche, nominated Personal Representative of the Estate of Fraya K. Fritsche, c/o Christopher J. LaLonde, Esq., Veritas Law Group at:

107 W. Michigan Avenue Ste. 500 Kalamazoo, MI 49007 and the Trustee within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

July 29, 2025
Date

Veritas Law Group
Christopher J. LaLonde P68317
Attorney name **Bar no.**

Personal Representative and Trustee's Name:
Charles L. Fritsche, Trustee of the Fraya K. Fritsche Trust dated April 22, 1992, as amended and/or Charles L. Fritsche, nominated Personal Representative of the Estate of Fraya K. Fritsche, c/o Christopher J. LaLonde, Esq., Veritas Law Group at:

Attorney's Address:
107 W. Michigan Ave, Ste 500
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269)270-3500

Trustee's Address:
107 W. Michigan Ave, Ste 500
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269)270-3500

PUBLIC/LEGAL NOTICES

To place a public notice, please send your requests to legals@pmginmi.com.

Please allow 48 hours to process, larger legals may need at least four business days.

STATE OF MICHIGAN
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF VAN BUREN

C.H. BROWN CO., LLC,
a Wyoming limited liability company,
Plaintiff,
v.
NO EMOTIONS LLC, a Michigan limited liability company, and
MITAR RADULOVIC, an individual,
Defendants.

Case No. 2025-074847-CK
Hon. Susan Metzger

TAFT STETTINIUS & HOLLISTER, LLP
Deborah S. Rubin (P58752) drubin@taftlaw.com
Benjamin M. Low (P82834) benlow@taftlaw.com
Yohana Iyob (P86924) yiyob@taftlaw.com
Attorneys for Plaintiff
27777 Franklin Road, Ste 2500, Southfield, MI 48034, (248)351-3000

EX PARTE ORDER FOR ALTERNATE SERVICE
At a session of Court, held in the
City of Paw Paw, Van Buren County, Michigan,
on: July 7, 2025
Present: Hon. Susan Metzger
Circuit Court Judge

C.H. Brown Co., LLC ("Plaintiff") through its attorneys, filed its Ex Parte Motion to Allow Alternate Service pursuant to MCR 2.105(J) and MCR 2.106 (the "Motion"). The Court, having reviewed the Motion and attachments, and otherwise being fully informed of the circumstances, finds:

1. Plaintiff attempted to serve Defendants No Emotions, LLC and Mitar Radulovic ("Defendants") via personal service through a process server.
2. Plaintiff's attempts to serve Defendants were unsuccessful.
3. Based on the foregoing, as well as the other facts set forth in Plaintiff's Motion, Plaintiff has established that service of process cannot be reasonably made, and, good cause having been shown, alternate service is appropriate under MCR 2.105 and MCR 2.106.
NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that Plaintiff's Motion is **GRANTED**; and
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that service may be made upon Defendants, pursuant to MCR 2.105 and MCR 2.106, by serving Defendants with the Complaint and Summons, and this Order by the following alternate means:
A. Mailing via first class mail to 63511 Country Road 388; South Haven, MI 49090 and
B. Posting at 63511 Country Road 388; South Haven, MI 49090.
C. Publication pursuant to MCR 2.106(D)(1).

IT IS SO ORDERED.
Susan Metzger
CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE HSPAXLP

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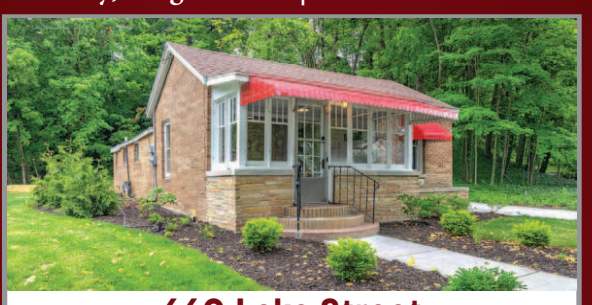
Sunday, August 3rd | 12:00PM - 2:00PM



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Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

South Haven Center for the Arts: "Altered Consumerism" exhibition from Aug. 8 through Sept. 20.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1-4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time from 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays.

South Haven Farm Market: Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. through October. Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. June through August at Huron Street Pavilion.

Summer meals to go: Free meal kits with seven days of breakfast and lunch to take home from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays through Aug. 6 at South Haven High School.

Daydreamer Domes: Local community pool day every Tuesday at 11 a.m.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lake Arvesta: Summer at the pasture concert every Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Storywalk "Fly, Butterfly" by Bonnie Bader from Aug. 1 through 31.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: New Exhibit – "The Adventures of Liberty Hyde Bailey – Chicago: 1872." Available during museum hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Fish Tales Story Time at 11 a.m. on Mondays through August.

August

4 – Kiwanis, Mick Middaugh and Nick Culp give an update on the Palisades re-opening: Noon at the Senior Services Center. All are welcome.

4 – South Haven Memorial Library: Summer reading program activity; rockets at the South Haven High School tennis courts at 3 p.m.

5 – National Night Out: from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Huron Street Pavilion.

5 – Scott Club: "Shall we dance?" A look back at early 20th century Michigan dance pavilions and venues at 1 p.m.

5 – Rotary Club: South Haven Public Works Director Dana Burd to present.

6 – South Haven Memorial Library: Summer reading program activity at Elkenburg Park at 1 p.m.

6 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

6-7 – Fennville District Library: Littles Art Camp, ages 2 to 5 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Registration is required.

8 – South Haven Memorial Library: Summer reading program celebrate summer event.

8-10 – National Blueberry Festival.

9-10 – Blueberry Festival craft fair: from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m on Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

10 – Rotary Club: Pancake breakfast and Fly-in at South Haven Airport.

11-15 – Fennville District Library: Art Camp, ages 6 to 18 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Registration is required.

12 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven Strummers ukulele event for all ages from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

13 – South Haven Memorial Library: Estate Planning event presented by Schuitmaker Moraitis Law Office of Paw Paw from noon to 2:45 p.m.

14 – Riverfront Concert Series: Shamara Tumblin to perform jazz gospel music at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Marina lawn.

14 – South Haven Area Young Professionals: Monthly networking event from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Captain Lou's.

15 – South Haven Performance Series: The Poulenc Trio, an oboe, bassoon and piano trio at 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church.

16 – Salute to Veterans boat parade and fly-over: Starting at noon at South Beach.

16 – South Haven Theatre Series: "Winston Churchill: The Blitz" starring Randy Otto at 7:30 p.m. at Listiak Auditorium.

18 – Kiwanis: South Haven Area Emergency Services Chief Brandon Hinz to give an update on emergency services. Noon at the Senior Services Center. All are welcome.

19 – Scott Club: The life of World War I soldier David Lee Sutfin presented by Steve Rossio at 1 p.m.

19 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Presentation on monarchs from Janice Wick of the Paw Paw Monarch Waystation. Free event.

20 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

21 – Riverfront Concert Series: Casco Community Band at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Marina lawn.

22 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Rock the Boat from 7 to 10 p.m.

23 – American Legion Post #49: BBQ on the Bluff from 4 to 9 p.m.

23 – Liverpool Legends: "The Complete Beatles Experience" at 7:30 p.m. at Warner Vineyard in Paw Paw.

27 – First Congregational UCC: Open Mic Night at 6 p.m.

28 – Riverfront Concert Series: Zion Lion, Kalamazoo's premier reggae band at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Marina lawn.

30-31 – All Crafts Fair: from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m on Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday at Stanley Johnston Park.

September

3 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

4-7 – Michigan Flywheelers Museum: Antique Engine and Tractor Show. Gates open at 8 a.m. Admission is $10 per person. Children 12 years old and under are free with paid admission.

9 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven Strummers ukulele event for all ages from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

11 – South Haven Area Young Professionals: Monthly networking event from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at New Park Gastropub.

17 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

18 – After Business Ours: Networking event hosted by South Haven Banking Center. For South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce members only. From 5 to 7 p.m. RSVP required.

24 – Historical Association of South Haven: "Genealogy for Beginners" presentation by Katherine Wilson from 7 to 8 p.m.

25 – Gingerman Raceway: Track Night from 1:30 to 8:30 p.m.

26 – South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce: Golf Outing starting at 9 a.m. at Beeches Golf Club. Registration required.

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The Spotlight

A Weekly Guide To Services & Business Around Town.

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BERNHARD

From page A1

I am also a water lover; that's one of the reasons why my husband and I moved to South Haven. We are on the water frequently. I'm also a very active member of the South Haven Yacht Club and I'm on their board.

I am working right now to become fluent again in Spanish. When I was a senior in high school, I was an exchange student and I lived in Spain. When I came back I was completely fluent, but throughout the years I've lost that, so I'm working to get that skill back.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

TAX CUT

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more difficult.

"We need to be very thoughtful in our approach," Bollin said Wednesday. "We are going to continue on our course."

The impacts of the federal policy will primarily strike the state's General Fund, which was previously expected to have about $15.1 billion in revenue next year.

Robert Schneider, senior research associate for state affairs for the Citizens Research Council, said K-12 schools in Michigan, which are funded through the School Aid Fund, should be concerned about lawmakers shifting dollars from the School Aid Fund to replace lost General Fund money.

The School Aid Fund is primarily supported by sales tax and personal income tax revenue, while business tax dollars go to the General Fund.

"If we need to make sizable general fund cuts in the budget, one of the options that will likely get looked at is shifting School Aid Fund back to universities," Schneider said.

Ronaldo Schemidt / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

People look on as law enforcement and volunteers continue to search for missing people near Camp Mystic, the site of where at least 20 girls went missing after flash flooding in Hunt, Texas, on July 5.

How a cloud-seeding company became the center of a *Texas flood conspiracy*

By HAYLEY SMITH
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Two days before the waters of the Guadalupe River swelled into a deadly and devastating Fourth of July flood in Kerr County, Texas, engineers with a California-based company called Rainmaker took off in an airplane about 100 miles away and dispersed 70 grams of silver iodide into a cloud.

Their goal? To make it rain over Texas – part of a weather modification practice known as cloud seeding, which uses chemical compounds to augment water droplets inside clouds, making the drops large enough and heavy enough to fall to the ground.

But in the hours after the flood swept through the greater Kerrville area and killed at least 135 people, including three dozen children, conspiracy theories began swirling among a small but vocal group of fringe figures.

"I NEED SOMEONE TO LOOK INTO WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS … WHEN WAS THE LAST CLOUD SEEDING?" wrote Pete Chambers, a former U.S. special forces commander and prominent far-right activist, on the social media platform X.

The post received 3.1 million views, yet was only one of several accusations that sprang up around Rainmaker's activities and its alleged connection to the flood.

"Anyone who calls this out as a conspiracy theory can go F themselves," wrote Michael Flynn, former national security advisor under the first Trump administration, atop a repost of Chambers' tweet.

The flurry of allegations was quickly debunked, with a number of independent scientists saying that the company's actions could not have produced anywhere close to the amount of rain that triggered the flood.

"It's very clear that they have nothing to do with it," said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist with the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, in a YouTube briefing following the flood.

Rainmaker also denied the claims. The storm dropped as much as four inches of rain per hour over Texas Hill Country, and the river in some places rose by 26 feet in less than 45 minutes.

But in some ways, the damage was done. Conspiracy theorists who have long alleged that Deep State Democrats are controlling the weather now had a real incident to point to. And researchers, companies and experts working to study and perform weather modification and geoengineering practices – which some say will be needed as climate change worsens – now have an even bigger hurdle to overcome.

Within hours of the deadly flood, Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene said she was introducing a bill to make all forms of weather modification – such as cloud seeding – a felony.

"This is not normal," the Georgia representative said in a post on X. "No person, company, entity, or government should ever be allowed to modify our weather by any means possible!!"

That same week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency launched twonew websites to "address public questions and concerns " about weather modification, geoengineering, and contrails, or the thin clouds that form behind aircraft at high altitudes.

"To anyone who's ever looked up to the streaks in the sky and asked,' what the heck is going on?,' or seen headlines about private actors and even governments looking to blot out the sun in the name of stopping global warming – we've endeavored to answer all of your questions," EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said in a video accompanying the websites' launch. "In fact, EPA shares many of the same concerns when it comes to potential threats to human health and the environment."

The EPA website notes that there is a distinction between geoengineering, which involves a broad range of activities designed to modify global temperatures, and weather modification techniques such as cloud seeding, which are generally short-lived and localized.

In fact, the process of cloud seeding was invented in the United States and has existed for nearly 80 years. General Electric scientists Vincent Schaefer, Irving Langmuir and Bernard Vonnegut – older brother of the late novelist Kurt Vonnegut – began experimenting with it as early as 1946.

On July 2, Rainmaker's team was working in Runge, Texas, about 125 miles southeast of where the Guadalupe River would soon flood, according to Augustus Doricko, founder and chief executive of the company, which is headquartered in El Segundo.

The team flew its plane to an elevation of 1,600 feet and dispersed about 70 grams of silver iodide into the clouds – an amount smaller than a handful of Skittles, Doricko said. The bright yellow compound is known to latch onto water droplets that are already present in clouds, converting them into ice crystals that can fall as rain or snow, depending on the temperature below.

Soon after the flight, Rainmaker's meteorologists identified an inflow of moisture to the region and advised the team to suspend operations, which they did, Doricko said. Around 1 a.m. the next day, the National Weather Service issued its first flash flood watch for the Kerr County region.

Doricko said there's no chance Rainmaker's actions – which were contracted by the nonprofit South Texas Weather Modification Assn. and on file with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – contributed to the flood.

"The biggest and best cloud seeding operations we've seen to date have produced tens of millions – and maximally like 100 million – gallons of precipitation," he said. "We saw in excess of a trillion gallons of precipitation from that flood. Not only could cloud seeding not have caused this, but the aerosols that we dispersed days prior could not have persisted in the atmosphere long enough to have had any consequence on the storm."

Multiple independent experts agreed.

During his briefing, Swain noted that cloud seeding does not create new clouds – it must be conducted on preexisting clouds that already have water vapor or small liquid drops inside of them, essentially enhancing what already had the potential to fall. What's more, its effects last "minutes to maybe an hour," Swain said.

"Best-case-scenario estimates – absolute best-case – are that these cloud-seeding operations are able to augment the amount of precipitation by at most 10% to 15% over very limited areas," Swain said. "On average, it's a lot lower than that. In fact, in some cases, it's difficult to prove that cloud seeding does anything at all."

Indeed, Andrew Dessler, a professor of atmospheric sciences at Texas A&M University, has gone so far as to call cloud seeding a scam – in part because it can prey on farmers and other people who are desperate for rain, and because it typically delivers only modest results, he said.

"There's no physical way that cloud seeding could have made the Texas storm," Dessler said, noting that the storm was fueled by extremely high levels of atmospheric water that stemmed from a tropical disturbance in the Gulf of Mexico. "This is a nonsense argument. There's no debate here about whether cloud seeding played a role in this disaster."

Dessler said the whole dust-up surrounding Rainmaker and the Texas flood is a distraction from the very real issues and challenges posed by global warming. The amount of material injected into the atmosphere during cloud seeding and geoengineering operations pales in comparison to the trillions of tons of carbon dioxide humans have already spewed into the atmosphere, he said.

"The real irony here is that in some sense, the argument they're making is correct – there is a conspiracy to change the climate," Dessler said. "It's through the emission of carbon dioxide, and it's by fossil fuel interests and the ecosystem that goes with that. That's the conspiracy."

Such limitations haven't stopped governments and municipalities from investing in cloud-seeding technology.

One of Rainmaker's first clients was the Utah Department of Natural Resources, which was interested in cloud seeding as a response to the drying of the Great Salt Lake, Doricko said. His company has also contracted with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, the Oregon Department of Agriculture and multiple municipalities in California, including the Public Works Departments of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties.

David Spiegel, supervising engineer with San Luis Obispo County's Public Works Department, said the county first began exploring cloud-seeding technology in the early 2000s in response to severe drought conditions and dwindling supplies at the Lopez Lake reservoir, which feeds five city agencies nearby. It took years to get the program off the ground, and it didn't ultimately run until 2019 through 2024 – when the state was dealing with yet another drought – to somewhat middling results.

Specifically, San Luis Obispo's cloud-seeding program added about 1,200 acre-feet of water per year to the nearly 50,000 acre-foot reservoir, he said. (An acre-foot is about 326,000 gallons.) In its best year, it added about 2,500 acre-feet.

Part of the challenge was that there weren't many clouds in the area to work with, Spiegel said. "We didn't have enough storms to seed because we were still in this drought period, so it was kind of unfortunate."

However, he still saw the program as a success because the small water supply gains that came from the cloud seeding priced out to about $300 per acre-foot – far less than the cost of importing supplies from other sources such as the State Water Project, which can run closer to $1,500 an acre-foot. He said he would still consider cloud seeding in the future should the reservoir run low again.

"We definitely see it as a viable option," Spiegel said.

So far, the state isn't investing in its own cloud-seeding programs, though it does keep a close eye on them, according to Jason Ince, a spokesman with the California Department of Water Resources. He said any groups conducting cloud seeding work are required to notify the agency by submitting a notice of intent.

An October report published by the department indicates there have been at least 16 cloud-seeding projects across multiple counties and watersheds in California in recent years.

Such efforts could become useful as climate conditions keep moving in the wrong direction: Warming temperatures and overuse are sapping groundwater supplies in California, while state and federal officials are still mired in negotiations over use of the Colorado River – a rapidly shrinking water lifeline that supplies 40 million people across the American West.

Meanwhile, global average temperatures continue to soar driven largely by fossil fuel emissions and human activity. Many experts say there's a good chance that some form of intervention – weather modification, geoengineering or some altogether new technology – will be needed in the years ahead.

"Weather modification projects are vital resources to enhance fresh water supply for communities within their watersheds," the Department of Water Resources report says. It recommends that the state continue to support existing cloud-seeding projects in the state and help facilitate new ones.

Speigel, of San Luis Obispo County, said laws banning cloud seeding and other weather modification measures – such as the one posed by Rep. Greene – would be a detriment to the region.

"It would be a setback for us, because we are constantly looking for other opportunities for water," he said. "It would limit our ability to seek out means of more water in these long drought periods. ... I definitely think it would stifle our ability to help our customers."

Even more controversial than cloud seeding are geoengineering techniques to block the amount of solar energy reaching the Earth. Some involve injecting sulfur into the stratosphere. A 2021 report on geoengineering published by the National Academies of Sciences affirmed that "meeting the challenge of climate change requires a portfolio of options," but advised caution around such methods.

"[Solar geoengineering] could potentially offer an additional strategy for responding to climate change but is not a substitute for reducing [greenhouse gas] emissions," the report says.

Dessler, who is also the director of the Texas Center for Extreme Weather at Texas A&M, likened geoengineering to airbags on a car – something no one ever hopes to use but that would be good to have in a climate emergency.

He said the focus should continue to be on reducing the use of fossil fuels, and that the talk of banning geoengineering, cloud seeding and other forms of weather modification by members of the Trump administration and some lawmakers is more political than scientific.

"It makes no sense – it shows you that this is not an argument about facts. It's an argument about worldview," he said.

The president has taken many steps to undo efforts to address climate change in recent months, including withdrawing from the Paris climate accord, an agreement among some 200 nations to limit global warming to under 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

The EPA has also removed several barriers and regulations that govern oil and gas drilling in the U.S., and has said it wants to repeal the endangerment finding – a long-held legal and scientific determination that CO2 emissions harm human health and welfare, among other significant changes.

Doricko, Rainmaker's CEO, said he was disappointed to see cloud seeding politicized in the wake of the Texas flood. He was taken aback when he saw that Rep. Greene had posted a picture of his face on X – "insinuating somewhat that cloud seeding, or I, was responsible for the natural disaster in Texas, when any meteorologist or atmospheric scientist could tell you otherwise," he said.

"Human civilization is unintentionally modifying the weather and the climate all the time," Doricko said, including through fossil fuel emissions and urban heat islands that warm surrounding areas. "What Rainmaker is trying to do is bring some intentionality to that, so that we can modify the weather for our benefit and deliberately."

‘Democratizing space’ is more than just adding new players – it comes with questions around sustainability and sovereignty

By TIMIEBI AGANABA
Arizona State University
By ADAM FISH
UNSW Sydney
By NIIYOKAMIGAABAW DEONDRE SMILES
University of British Columbia
By TONY MILLIGAN
King’s College London
(The Conversation)

‘India is on the Moon,” S. Somanath, chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization, announced in August 2023. The announcement meant India had joined the short list of countries to have visited the Moon, and the applause and shouts of joy that followed signified that this achievement wasn’t just a scientific one, but a cultural one.

Over the past decade, many countries have established new space programs, including multiple African nations. India and Israel – nations that were not technical contributors to the space race in the 1960s and ‘70s – have attempted landings on the lunar surface.

With more countries joining the evolving space economy, many of our colleagues in space strategy, policy ethics and law have celebrated the democratization of space: the hope that space is now more accessible for diverse participants.

We are a team of researchers based across four countries with expertise in space policy and law, ethics, geography and anthropologywho have written about the difficulties and importance of inclusion in space.

Major players like the U.S., the European Union and China may once have dominated space and seen it as a place to try out new commercial and military ventures. Emerging new players in space, like other countries, commercial interests and nongovernmental organizations, may have other goals and rationales. Unexpected new initiatives from these newcomers could shift perceptions of space from something to dominate and possess to something more inclusive, equitable and democratic.

We address these emerging and historical tensions in a paper published in May 2025 in the journal Nature, in which we describe the difficulties and importance of including nontraditional actors and Indigenous peoples in the space industry.

Continuing inequalities among space players

Not all countries’ space agencies are equal. Newer agencies often don’t have the same resources behind them that large, established players do.

The U.S. and Chinese programs receive much more funding than those of any other country. Because they are most frequently sending up satellites and proposing new ideas puts them in the position to establish conventions for satellite systems, landing sites and resource extraction that everyone else may have to follow.

Sometimes, countries may have operated on the assumption that owning a satellite would give them the appearance of soft or hard geopolitical power as a space nation – and ultimately gain relevance.

In reality, student groups of today can develop small satellites, called CubeSats, autonomously, and recent scholarship has concluded that even successful space missions may negatively affect the international relationships between some countries and their partners. The respect a country expects to receive may not materialize, and the costs to keep up can outstrip gains in potential prestige.

Environmental protection and Indigenous perspectives

Usually, building the infrastructure necessary to test and launch rockets requires a remote area with established roads. In many cases, companies and space agencies have placed these facilities on lands where Indigenous peoples have strong claims, which can lead to land disputes, like in western Australia.

Many of these sites have already been subject to human-made changes, through mining and resource extraction in the past. Many sites have been ground zero for tensions with Indigenous peoples over land use. Within these contested spaces, disputes are rife.

Because of these tensions around land use, it is important to include Indigenous claims and perspectives. Doing so can help make sure that the goal of protecting the environments of outer space and Earth are not cast aside while building space infrastructure here on Earth.

Some efforts are driving this more inclusive approach to engagement in space, including initiatives like “Dark and Quiet Skies”, a movement that works to ensure that people can stargaze and engage with the stars without noise or sound pollution.

This movement and other inclusive approaches operate on the principle of reciprocity: that more players getting involved with space can benefit all.

Researchers have recognized similar dynamics within the larger space industry. Some scholars have come to the conclusion that even though the space industry is “pay to play,” commitments to reciprocity can help ensure that players in space exploration who may not have the financial or infrastructural means to support individual efforts can still access broader structures of support.

The downside of more players entering space is that this expansion can make protecting the environment – both on Earth and beyond – even harder.

The more players there are, at both private and international levels, the more difficult sustainable space exploration could become. Even with good will and the best of intentions, it would be difficult to enforce uniform standards for the exploration and use of space resources that would protect the lunar surface, Mars and beyond.

It may also grow harder to police the launch of satellites and dedicated constellations. Limiting the number of satellites could prevent space junk, protect the satellites already in orbit and allow everyone to have a clear view of the night sky. However, this would have to compete with efforts to expand internet access to all.

What is space exploration for?

Before tackling these issues, we find it useful to think about the larger goal of space exploration, and what the different approaches are. One approach would be the fast and inclusive democratization of space – making it easier for more players to join in. Another would be a more conservative and slower “big player” approach, which would restrict who can go to space.

The conservative approach is liable to leave developing nations and Indigenous peoples firmly on the outside of a key process shaping humanity’s shared future.

But a faster and more inclusive approach to space would not be easy to run. More serious players means it would be harder to come to an agreement about regulations, as well as the larger goals for human expansion into space.

Narratives around emerging technologies, such as those required for space exploration, can change over time, as people begin to see them in action.

Technology that we take for granted today was once viewed as futuristic or fantastical, and sometimes with suspicion. For example, at the end of the 1940s, George Orwell imagined a world in which totalitarian systems used tele-screens and videoconferencing to control the masses.

Earlier in the same decade, Thomas J. Watson, then president of IBM, notoriously predicted that there would be a global market for about five computers. We as humans often fear or mistrust future technologies.

However, not all technological shifts are detrimental, and some technological changes can have clear benefits. In the future, robots may perform tasks too dangerous, too difficult or too dull and repetitive for humans. Biotechnology may make life healthier. Artificial intelligence can sift through vast amounts of data and turn it into reliable guesswork. Researchers can also see genuine downsides to each of these technologies.

Space exploration is harder to squeeze into one streamlined narrative about the anticipated benefits. The process is just too big and too transformative.

To return to the question if we should go to space, our team argues that it is not a question of whether or not we should go, but rather a question of why we do it, who benefits from space exploration and how we can democratize access to broader segments of society. Including a diversity of opinions and viewpoints can help find productive ways forward.

Ultimately, it is not necessary for everyone to land on one single narrative about the value of space exploration. Even our team of four researchers doesn’t share a single set of beliefs about its value. But bringing more nations, tribes and companies into discussions around its potential value can help create collaborative and worthwhile goals at an international scale.

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"I was shocked at what was happening to me," Javier Diaz Santana, 32, said of his arrest by immigration agents. He has no criminal history.
Christina House / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Deaf, mute and terrified

ICE arrests DACA recipient and ships him to Texas

By BRITTNY MEJIA
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — He was on his way to wash a car when he glanced up and saw co-workers sprinting off. A woman frantically motioned for him to flee. His heart raced as he tried to find the source of their alarm.

Confused and frightened, Javier Diaz Santana jumped over the wall behind the car wash in the San Gabriel Valley. Years earlier, a vehicle had run over Diaz's foot while he worked there, and it was a struggle for him to run. He made it about a block. His foot throbbed with pain.

He saw two white SUVs on the street and realized what was unfolding. His workplace was being raided by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, like so many other businesses and neighborhoods in Los Angeles over the past week.

Breathless, Diaz stopped. One of the vehicles pulled over, blocking his way. Masked, armed men exited, yelling. He tried to understand. He couldn't see a badge. One had a vest with the letters "HSI" – Homeland Security Investigations, an arm within ICE.

One seemed to be demanding something. Diaz gestured at his ears.

He could not hear. And he couldn't speak.

Diaz, 32, is deaf and mute. He thought that presenting his Real ID driver's license would keep him safe. He has legal permission to be here. He came to the U.S. from Mexico when he was about 5 years old and had been granted permission to work more than a decade ago under the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. He has no criminal history.

He took his wallet from his pocket. An agent grabbed it and wouldn't give it back.

Diaz took out his phone so he could type a message about his disability. They took that too. Then they cuffed his hands and shoved him into the SUV. He had no way to communicate.

"I was shocked at what was happening to me," Diaz said through an American Sign Language interpreter. "I'm Mexican, I know you can tell I'm Mexican, but I don't know what you're catching me for. I was scared. I felt fear. What does that mean? I'm Mexican and you're going to throw me out of the country?

"They just drove off, and I'm gone. There's no communication," he said. "I didn't understand why."

And so began a surreal near month Diaz never could have imagined taking place in the United States. He was sent to an immigration detention center in El Paso, where he spent weeks unable to communicate with his attorney or his family. At times, Diaz received paperwork in Spanish – a language he cannot read.

His experience raises serious questions, beyond whether people who are in this country with legal protection should be seized and detained by immigration agents. If ICE is going to apprehend people with disabilities, shouldn't agents follow federal law and make the required accommodations available?

In a statement, an unidentified senior Department of Homeland Security official said medical staff provided Diaz "with a communications board and an American Sign Language interpreter."

The statement ignored the fact that Diaz has DACA protection provided by the government. After the Times followed up again about that protection, a senior DHS official said in an email, "Deferred action does not confer any form of legal status in this country."

"The facts are this individual is an illegal alien. This Administration is not going to ignore the rule of law," the original statement read.

"The United States is offering illegal aliens $1,000 and a free flight to self-deport now," DHS continued. "We encourage every person here illegally to take advantage of this offer and reserve the chance to come back to the U.S. the right legal way to live American dream. If not, you will be arrested and deported without a chance to return."

In another case this month, a federal judge ruled that the government had to provide a Mongolian Sign Language interpreter to a deaf immigrant who has been detained in San Diego County since February. U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw, a George W. Bush appointee, reportedly called it "common sense that a person has a right to communicate."

Diaz was released July 8. He is one of an unknown number of immigrants with permission to live and work in the U.S. who have been caught in the dragnet of President Trump's deportation campaign.

Diaz's attorney, Roxana V. Muro, said she has another client who remains detained after being picked up outside a Home Depot despite showing his work permit.

"They really just don't care if they have a work permit, if they have DACA, if they have [Temporary Protected Status] – they detain," Muro said. "They're just engaging in racial profiling. It's nothing but that. They don't care whether you stand and produce documents or run."

Diaz, she said, "was working lawfully, doing everything right, everything he was supposed to be doing."

Diaz arrived in the U.S. as a child. His parents had struggled to get him the services he needed in Mexico, they hoped he would have a better life here.

The family moved to South L.A., where Diaz, an older brother and his parents squeezed into a two-bedroom apartment with three relatives. They were fixtures in the complex. Neighbors became close friends, at times celebrating the New Year, birthdays and other holidays together.

Diaz thrived. He attended Marlton School, which specialized in teaching students from kindergarten through 12th grade who are deaf and hard of hearing. He ran track and was a right winger on the soccer team. He graduated in 2011.

His brother Miguel, who is nine years younger, attended the same school to learn ASL so the siblings could communicate. Diaz cannot read or write in Spanish and relies on Miguel, 23, to be his voice. Their mother knows some sign language; their father speaks in Spanish into Google Translate and then shows Diaz the English translation.

Diaz came to the attention of immigration officials in 2013, when an asylum application was filed on his behalf. The application triggered removal proceedings.

But under the Obama administration, the federal government used a procedure called administrative closure to help clear immigration court backlog by temporarily removing some cases from the docket so resources could be focused on higher-priority cases.

Diaz's case was administratively closed. At about the same time, he received DACA protection.

He was hired at the car wash in Temple City in 2020. He worked six days a week, hosing down cars, soaping them up and vacuuming inside. He loved that it was fast paced. His co-workers knew him as "el mudo," the mute.

Diaz was normally off Fridays. But on June 12, a Thursday, he'd gotten two flat tires and hadn't been able to work his regular shift. His boss asked him if he could work the next day. So he went in.

That morning, everyone at the car wash was on high alert. They had heard ICE was in the area. News of raids had been circulating for a week.

Diaz noticed that fewer people had shown up to work when he started his shift about 8 a.m. His boss wrote a message asking if he was documented. Diaz wrote back that he had DACA protection.

A co-worker pointed out the white SUVs nearby. They told Diaz the vehicles belonged to ICE.

Diaz had just finished his 30-minute lunch break and was walking over to wash a car. Grainy surveillance footage reviewed by The Times captured what happened next.

Five people in blue work shirts bearing the car wash's logo made a beeline for the wall and appeared to use a bench to jump over. Someone gestured for Diaz to run. He couldn't hear the shouts of "migra."

He walked a few steps, put a hand on his head, appearing confused. He jogged to the wall and pulled himself over, dropping out of sight.

After he landed, Diaz felt pain shoot through his foot. He scaled a few more walls in backyards before running out onto Sultana Avenue. Agents spotted him and blocked his path.

Diaz motioned that he couldn't hear. The agents took his phone and cuffed his hands in front of him, tight enough to bruise. They did not explain why he was under arrest or say why he was being taken.

"I signal to them I can't hear, and they just go ahead and cuff me. They're very forceful," he said. "They don't care. They don't care if you understand. They just cuffed me. There's no explanation as to what's going on, no one told me anything."

He sat in the SUV. An officer showed Diaz his phone, where he had typed a question: What country are you from? Diaz couldn't answer.

"I can't sign with my hands cuffed," Diaz said. "They took my power."

When he was eventually transported to downtown L.A., he saw protesters and the National Guard. He was shackled around the waist and held in what he likened to a jail.

Diaz struggled to quantify how many others were waiting with him, saying "it was a lot more than I can think." There were three big groups of people, he recalled.

Bryan was there, too. His friend gestured with his hands, trying to calm Diaz, who feared he wouldn't hear his name called. Bryan gestured at his own ears, telling him that he was listening for him.

But then Bryan's name was called, and he was moved into another room. He flagged down an officer and explained he was trying to help his friend, who cannot hear or speak.

"That has nothing to do with you," he said the officer responded. He didn't see Diaz again.

An agent with a badge around his neck approached Diaz, who motioned that he couldn't hear. The agent wrote on a piece of paper in Spanish. He removed the cuffs and Diaz wrote back that he only knew English. Another agent asked Diaz when he entered the country.

"I don't remember, I was a baby, I don't know that story exactly," he said. "I couldn't give them those details."

They asked if he had a green card. Diaz wrote no.

"I thought they were going to ask me, 'Do you have DACA,'" he said. They never did.

He thought they would check his wallet. His mother had taken his current work authorization card, which expires in October, so she could help him renew his permit. But his license was there.

Diaz was finger printed and photographed, still in his work uniform. Inside the detention center, there was a bathroom, but no shower and no space to sleep.

Despite so many people around him, Diaz said, he felt alone.

Diaz's family was desperate to find him. His mother, Maria, had gotten a call from a relative telling her the car wash had been hit by ICE.

Maria feared her middle son, a slight 5-foot-5, would be deported to Mexico, where he wouldn't be able to read signs. Life was already hard there; what would it be like for Diaz, she wondered. He doesn't know Mexican Sign Language.

"I'm never going to see him again," Maria thought.

The family called Muro's office that day and spoke with an assistant. The immigration firm was booked out with appointments two months in advance. But when the raids began, Muro instructed her staff to screen those detained to see if they could help or refer them out.

That evening, she learned of Diaz's case. She called the family.

After learning Miguel had had no luck finding his brother downtown, Muro drove to an ICE office in San Bernardino. An officer in the parking lot gave her the phone number and email address for a supervisor at the B-18 detention center where Diaz was being held.

She called. It was around 7:30 p.m. No one answered. So she sent an email.

"Help DEAF MUTE CLIENT DETAINED WITH DACA," the subject line read. She attached Diaz's current work permit, which had been issued by U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services.

"Since he had DACA, under any other period of time in my time practicing, this would have been somewhat easy," Muro said. "You show up with the DACA approval notices and talk to a supervisor and I'm almost certain he would have been released."

The supervisor responded, saying he would look into it.

By June 15, Diaz was on a plane to Texas. It was his first time flying.

He spent the trip in handcuffs.

When Diaz arrived at a detention center in El Paso, he changed out of his work uniform and into a blue shirt and pants. Officers kept him in a cell by himself.

Diaz said he received pen and paper, on which he would ask to go to the bathroom. He had never felt more isolated. At times he cried and wondered if his family was crying too.

Although the ICE locator showed Diaz in El Paso, Muro struggled to find him, even when she provided the facility with his "alien registration number," assigned to noncitizens. It wasn't until she provided a variation of his name that they were able to track him down. She sent proof of Diaz's DACA protection, but he remained detained.

Muro learned that the government in May had filed a motion to revive Diaz's administratively closed case.

In recent months, Muro said she's received 40 motions from the government that involved reopening administratively closed cases. At least one involved someone who was already granted lawful permanent residency. Diaz's case, she said, had yet to be put back on the court calendar.

Muro tried to find a way to connect with Diaz as he was detained in Texas. The supervisor told her the facility did not have text telephone devices, used by people with hearing or speech disabilities to send and receive text messages.

Muro saw her client for the first time on Webex at his bond hearing on July 2. During the hearing in El Paso, Diaz, hunched over, hair disheveled, turned toward the camera to watch an interpreter explain the proceedings.

He said it was the first time in weeks someone communicated with him using sign language. Other than acknowledging when the judge asked questions, Diaz kept his hands clasped in his lap.

Muro told the judge that Diaz's removal case had been administratively closed in 2013. She said he has DACA protection, that it was just renewed and would not expire until 2027.

A Department of Homeland Security lawyer who sat at a table near Diaz said that an addendum in Diaz's arrest record in Texas acknowledged that he had DACA. She added that Diaz's case remained administratively closed, which appeared to puzzle the judge.

"I never have had that before, where I have a bond request on an admin closed case," the judge said. "This is the first time."

The government lawyer explained that Diaz had been picked up during "an at-large operation by ERO and HSI," both arms of ICE. The judge questioned whether he even had jurisdiction to grant bond.

"You do have jurisdiction. He should not even be detained," Muro said. "He was lawfully working at the Temple City Car Wash when ICE raided the car wash. I can discuss the illegal arrest later."

The judge asked if Diaz had any criminal history. The government lawyer said no.

"There's no evidence in the record that would suggest that you are a danger," the judge told Diaz.

Muro told the judge her client was not a flight risk and had maintained his DACA over the years. The judge set bond at the minimum – $1,500.

He gave Homeland Security the discretion to monitor Diaz but said the agency was not required to do so.

"Good luck," the judge told Diaz. "I hope that everything works out for you."

The following day, Diaz was finally able to talk to Muro and his family. His mother cried. He felt like crying too.

His brother told him he would soon be released. Diaz asked if his brother had retrieved his car. Miguel assured him he had.

On July 8, a Tuesday, an agent signaled Diaz to get up from his bed. He wrote to Diaz that his bond had been paid and he could leave. Twenty-five days had passed since his arrest. It was his mother's birthday.

"Finally, I'm free," he thought. But before he left, the officers put a black monitor on his left ankle.

Diaz didn't know what the monitor was or why it had been attached to his ankle. The officers handed him a sheet of paper with instructions on the device. It was in Spanish.

Miguel and a cousin bought flights to El Paso. Diaz waited in a shelter. When they came to pick him up, Miguel was given his brother's belongings, including his wallet. The Real ID was no longer inside.

Expenses kept stacking up. They rented a hotel. Because they couldn't fly without Diaz's ID, Miguel scrambled to rent a car.

Miguel noticed a change in his brother, who often smiled and laughed, but now seemed reserved. Diaz would ask permission to eat. To use the restroom. To shower.

"I knew he had a fear," Miguel said. "I think he felt he had to be a certain type of way."

He did not start to calm down until they reached California.

As night fell, Diaz's father, Miguel Sr., clutched his phone outside the apartment, watching his son's location draw nearer with each minute.

As Diaz shuffled toward the stairs leading to his apartment, his father bounded down. He held a blue poster the neighbors had made. It read: "Welcome Home Javier." Another poster delivered the same message, this time in sign language.

Diaz's eyes were blank, his arms heavy at his sides.

Miguel Sr. embraced his son. Neighbors cried as they hugged the man they had known since he was a boy. They patted his hair, which had grown long in detention. He hiked up his pants leg to display the ankle monitor.

His mother was waiting in the hallway of their small apartment. He reached for her, hugged her tight.

As he wiped away her tears, his own threatened to spill over.

Finally, he was home.

FOCUS

Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Dug enjoys an aqua cardio session, in a private pool, with Buddy: Canine Wellness owner, Jazz Pritchard.

Inside the world of dog wellness – as experienced by *one very lucky golden retriever*

By DEBORAH VANKIN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — The Jaguar Supersport, ’65 Ford Thunderbird and ’73 Alfa Romeo are taken by other clients today, so Dug – an 8-year-old golden retriever – is being chauffeured to the Sunset Strip in a presidential Cadillac stretch limo for his spa treatments. He’s headed to Collar & Comb in West Hollywood, where he’ll be getting a blueberry facial and exfoliating mud mask from the same professionals who groom the mutts of Gwyneth Paltrow, Mark Wahlberg and Dakota Johnson.

Dug sits upright on the limo’s black Corinthian leather seat, flanked by crystal liquor decanters on one side and a TV and VCR on the other. He gazes out the window, tongue hanging out excitedly, as the spiky palm trees whiz by. Then he flops down and chomps on a stuffed Chewy Vuiton Paris bone toy.

Such is the world of dog wellness in Los Angeles. The goal? “Heal.”

Wellness for dogs is a niche industry that mirrors the spectrum of wellness treatments for humans. As with humans, it swings from the relaxing and rejuvenating to the dubious. Vet-affiliated treatments include acupuncture, hydrotherapy and chiropractic care. Nutrition is its own subculture that includes raw and organic food, supplements and Western and Chinese herbal remedies. On the pampering end, dog spas and private practitioners offer massage, reiki meditation, inflammation-fighting red light therapy and skin and nail treatments, such as deluxe “pawdicures.” Fido feeling anxious? Try forest bathing or see a pet psychic.

Human-centric wellness for dogs is “at a high point,” says ”Pet Buzz” radio show cohost, Charlotte Reed. One reason: As vet bills rise, there’s been a greater focus on preventative care in recent years – although such preventative wellness is expensive, too. Also, as self-care for humans becomes more popular, there are simply more wellness products and services being developed for dogs. And an increasing number of pet owners now view their dogs as children, Reed says. A New York court recently ruled that dogs can be legally recognized as immediate family members in the state.

“People are worried about the world. So a lot of people are not having children – and they’re treating their dogs like kids,” Reed says. “Dogs – like kids – are a reflection of your lifestyle. If you’re into health and wellness, that’s what you want your dog to be into.”

At the same time, warns American Kennel Club chief veterinarian Dr. Jerry Klein, pet owners must be careful not to project human desires onto animals that, at best, don’t share the same tastes.

“A lot of this stuff, it’s geared to the humans. But what we derive pleasure and relaxation from might create the opposite for a dog that might not want to be touched or handled. People should get their vet’s opinion, always, before doing anything that might affect the dog’s health.”

I enlisted Dug – a wellness newbie whom I’ve known for years as his owners, Jeff and Lisa Alulis, are friends – to undergo a week of pampering in L.A. in order to explore some of the dog wellness treatments available.

Sunday: Sound bath for hounds

Dug is a happy-go-lucky guy. But he had a rough puppyhood, having been abandoned at a shelter where he suffered distemper, a viral disease and heartworm before being adopted. Perhaps because of that, he has nightmares, during which he kicks his feet and yelps. Could a relaxing sound bath help? It was worth a shot.

Victorious Solomon greeted us at Den Urban Dog Retreat in a man bun and T-shirt that reads “meditate with your dog.” The 10,000-square-foot space in Cypress Park, which Solomon owns with Lindsay Velez, is a dog “wellness campus” – Canyon Ranch for canines – that includes holistic grooming, daycare, hikes and spa services such as massage, aromatherapy, reiki, animal communication and crystal therapy. It also hosts workshops and social events for pups and their humans: Think coffee, DJs and dogs.

Solomon led us to a low-lit event space that featured a wall-length mural of a forest accentuated by flickering candles and swinging macramé chairs. About 20 dogs lay on yoga mats with their owners or they milled about the room as the free “relaxation concert” began, the sounds of crystal quartz and Tibetan brass bowls commingling with intermittent barking.

Sound healer Crystal Cao says she configured the event for canines: It was only 30 minutes long due to their attention spans (no distracting squirrels within eyeshot, but still) and she played “lower, primal, base tones to keep them calm and centered.” But every time she swayed the ocean drum, filled with beads that mimicked the sound of rain, Dug got up to explore, standing in front of it, head cocked to the side.

Eventually, like most other dogs there, Dug took a cue from his humans and relaxed on his mat as they stroked his fur. He left the sound bath seemingly relaxed, per usual. But the nightmares persisted.

Would his owners bring him back? Absolutely – if just for the dog social hour that took place in the yard beforehand.

Monday: Aqua strength training and cardio

Dug is up for nearly any water adventure. But walking on a treadmill, in a glass tank filled with water at chest level was new to him – and admittedly a little scary at first. But the folks at Buddy: Canine Wellness in Studio City were so patient he got through it. (Plus, the spa-like lobby featured soothing, scented candles and a jar of milk bone treats.)

Buddy isn’t affiliated with a veterinary practice. It doesn’t diagnose or prescribe but focuses, instead, on preventive health through fitness and recreation. In private sessions, dogs perform strength building and cardio workouts on an underwater treadmill or in a small swimming pool heated to 85 degrees, supposedly to aid blood circulation. (The initial hourlong visit is $250 with fitness assessment; then it’s $100 for 30-45 minutes.) The workouts are zero- or low-impact and easy on the joints, so suited for older dogs or those with arthritis or recovering from injuries.

Dug is in excellent health. So he visited Buddy for recreation – several clients come to burn off energy when it’s too hot to walk outdoors. Dug donned a life jacket in the pool and treaded around in the water, chasing a ball as co-owner Jazz Pritchard led him around in circles on a leash. Dug’s head is so massive that, with the rest of his body mostly underwater, he resembled a blond, furry Hippo cutting through the water’s surface.

If the goal was to tire Dug out, it was met: He slept soundly when he got home. But still: nightmares.

Tuesday: Reiki meditation

Reiki for humans is a Japanese energy-healing modality that, practitioners say, aids relaxation, pain relief and overall health by realigning the body’s energy centers, or “chakras.” For dogs, it looks like a gentle petting session.

Reiki practitioner Stacey Gong worked on Dug for 30 minutes as he laid on the grass, seaside, at Miramar Park in Redondo Beach. Gong works for Tailwagger’s Massage & Hydrofitness, which also offers restorative and sports massages as well as inflammation-fighting cold laser therapy, among other services. Dug gazed out at the ocean through the Torrey pine trees, as Gong smoothed his fur and gently ran her fingers along his spine. She softly squeezed his hip muscles, then caressed his midsection, shoulders and neck. Dug flipped onto his back, all four paws stretched out wide – Reiki was not so bad!

“His chakras are in pretty good shape,” Gong said afterward, as she applied a series of five essential oil blends specially created for animals. But his third eye chakra, she added, was slow.

“It’s swinging in the right direction, but we made it faster, so everything will be in concert,” she said. “And the dreams – I don’t think they’re bad. It’s more like he’s chasing bunnies.”

With his chakras aligned, the wind rippling his thick blond fur and smelling of pungent, earthy oregano oil, Dug stood up, panting merrily, and stared directly into the L.A. Times photographer’s lens, as if posing. Now on his third day out, Dug seemed to be feeling confident, more familiar with the camera that trailed him, even seeming to court it at times. Was Dug a wellness influencer in the making?

If so, Dug already has nearly 4,000 followers on Instagram. Photos of Reiki, seaside – a quintessential L.A. experience – stand to boost that number. But if nothing else, the $150 Reiki session was not a bad way to spend a Dog Day Afternoon.

Wednesday: VIP spa treatments

Dug hopped out of the limo at Collar & Comb (the same limo featured in the 1988 movie “Twins,” starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito) and – like any aspiring wellness influencer – posed for photos, snout in the air, in front of the luxury, members-only grooming and wellness salon. It was a feast of scents inside: gourmet chicken feet treats! New plushie toys! Fresh mint leaves and aloe vera for his upcoming facial!

Collar & Comb is a canine luxury ecosystem, with three social houses for dogs and their humans, three grooming salons and four private dog parks, not to mention a fleet of high-end vehicles to transport four-legged clients. And Dug got the true VIP treatment. He was whisked into a soundproof “spa suite,” where the founder, Paul Leonard, and master stylist, Yanko Hernandez, prepared the ingredients for his treatments. They swirled hand-muddled blueberries and raw honey into organic, sugar-free yogurt for his facial; they stirred exfoliating Japanese volcanic sand into mineral-rich Korean mud for his hydrating mask.

In his pursuit of perfection, Leonard barked orders to his staff with all the intensity of an ER doctor in an episode of ”The Pitt”: “Towels!” he yelled. (They appeared within seconds.) “Comb!” (Same.)

Dug took it all in stride, seemingly enjoying the two sets of hands rubbing the fragrant food into his face. He even managed to sneak in a lick, tasting the yogurt.

Meanwhile, Dug’s dad was treated to a plush bathrobe and champagne while relaxing in a massage chair as a mix of lo-fi jazz and jungle rock played on the sound system. He watched Dug getting pampered through the glass wall.

Dug was blown dry and finished off with a hotel-grade, organic cotton towel, rubbed with nourishing paw-balm and spritzed with “show dog” scent cologne. He didn’t join Collar & Comb given the $75 monthly dues minimum (which doesn’t include the cost of treatments), but he memorialized the experience with another round of photos, this time posing with an enormous cow knee bone in-mouth, a final treat to top off the indulgent day.

Thursday: Deep tissue massage

Dug may have enjoyed his afternoon with William Riddle, a certified canine masseuse, the most. For one, Riddle’s Doggissage is mobile, traveling through parts of Orange County and Los Angeles. So Dug got to relax in the comfort of his own backyard during his deep tissue massage. And the $50 hourlong massage was essentially a vigorous petting session, though different than the Reiki he’d experienced. Riddle applied increasing degrees of pressure, gently loosening up Dug’s muscles at first, and stimulating circulation, before going deeper.

Dug stretched out on a blanket by the swimming pool, a fountain trickling nearby. Riddle noticed that, like many dogs, Dug’s neck area was tight – dogs put 60 percent of their weight on their front legs, stressing their necks, Riddle explained – and so he spent more time massaging that area. Fine by Dug! Riddle performed somatics on Dug, slowly and smoothly moving his limbs to supposedly refine brain-muscle connection. Fine by Dug! Riddle even used a small metal tool that looked like a comb to help relieve tension. It was like being brushed. Also fine – two paws up!

Riddle performs canine massage for both relaxation and rehabilitation – he says that it relieves muscle tension and stress, increases blood flow and mobility and may ease pain from arthritis. But he strongly recommends discussing it with a veterinarian first.

Dug ended his massage with a beef stick treat – he’d have his new best friend back to the house any day!

Friday: Private, members-only social club

Social connection is a key tenant of wellness. So Dug ended his week at Dog PPL, a private, members-only dog park in Santa Monica with a staff of eerily beautiful people. It’s like Soho House for pups. For $120 per month, members can visit as often as they’d like. Pet owners must submit vet and vaccine records and dogs undergo a “temperament test” before being accepted. The fake grass-laden park is also monitored by “rufferees,” who are trained in canine safety and behavior.

It’s as much a community for humans, with a cafe and bar (cocktail of the day: muddled hibiscus margarita) and high-speed Wi-Fi so dog owners can work from the park while their pets play off-leash. Events include fitness classes and trivia nights.

Dug trotted in, gleaming from his facial and relaxed from his massage, and immediately made new friends. After stopping at the amenities table for fresh water, towels and doggie sunscreen, Dug tussled with another golden retriever, Bubbles, who was wearing a Goyard collar from Paris. But ultimately, she was too expensive for his taste.

Then he bonded with a German shepherd named Gino – the most popular guy in the park. Dug was part of the in crowd! Soon they were a threesome, with a Goldendoodle named Harry.

(Dog park gossip: Harry had a crush on Gino too and that stirred tensions between him and Dug.)

No matter: The visit was thoroughly enjoyable, the perfect way to cap off a week of wellness in Los Angeles.

HEALTH

Randy Tom, left, and his wife, Vera Tom, share a laugh as Randy stir-fries pork, bok choy, and bean sprouts for lunch at their Redwood City home on June 27. Dai Sugano / Bay Area News Group / TNS

New study could help doctors address diabetes, prediabetes

By JIA H. JUNG
The Mercury News (TNS)

SAN JOSE, Calif. — On a recent summer afternoon, Randy and Vera Tom prepared a stir-fried lunch in their Redwood City, California, home with their "sous chef," a 17-year-old Bichon Frise named Munchies, afoot.

Randy, 70, recently overhauled his lifestyle after the couple participated in a Stanford Medicine study tracking their metabolic responses to carbohydrates in real time with a continuous glucose monitoring device.

The recently published research tracked the glucose levels in the blood of 55 study subjects as they consumed precooked meals starring different carbohydrates such as grapes, jasmine rice, potatoes, pasta and bread. It was led by genetic deep data specialist Mike Snyder, metabolic expert Tracey McLaughin and research dietician Dalia Perelman at Stanford.

The results could lead to better prevention, diagnoses and treatment of prediabetes, diabetes and other metabolic diseases that lower quality of life and raise health care costs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 38.4 million people, or 11.6 percent of the U.S. population, had diabetes in 2024.

Most common is Type 2 diabetes, which occurs when the body develops resistance to insulin because of diet, lifestyle, weight and family history. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease attacking cells of the pancreas, disabling the body's production of insulin, the hormone that orchestrates the body's food-processing functions. Both types of diabetes are life-threatening without intervention.

According to the CDC, more than a third of the 250 million people 18 or older in the U.S. and almost half of the 60 million who are 65 or older are prediabetic – the vast majority unknowingly.

"How would you know, if you can only know with a test that you get only if there seems to be a problem?" asked Randy, cleaver in hand, chopping neatly organized piles of lean pork and technicolor-green bok choy.

The opportunity to access more personalized health information while contributing to science attracted the Toms to Stanford's genomics studies about a decade ago. They've been in more than five long-term studies since – the latest was the first involving food.

When the research team asked Randy what he ate over Christmas after seeing spikes in his blood sugar data, the culprit was tamales. Now, he enjoys just one of the corn-based treats per sitting.

For Snyder, the advancement of physiologically specific care has been personal. From 2009 to 2011, he and Stanford profiled his own descent from prediabetes into type 2 diabetes – the first time the phenomenon was documented at the molecular level.

Snyder, who is svelte and active, said, "When I first became diabetic, everybody looked at me and said, 'No way, it's gonna go away.'"

But the proof was in his integrative Personal "Omics" Profile, or iPOP, an unprecedented analysis of billions of individual bits of molecular genetic data collected by powerful cutting-edge technology.

This level of analysis allows researchers to understand people by metabolic subtype and tailor treatment to match.

Right now, doctors begin to classify metabolic shifts or prediabetes when glucose levels in the blood exceed 5.7 percent, with no information as to why the abnormality exists.

But there are four different pathways to metabolic disease – two where the body doesn't produce enough insulin and two where the body doesn't respond properly to insulin.

In the study, McLaughlin and Snyder looked for soft slopes in blood sugar. Jagged peaks are generally normal responses to food or sugar.

Everyone's blood sugar spikes in response to grapes and rice. But the scientists found that people with metabolic problems spiked higher and for longer to potato starch than people who lacked problems. The "potato-to-grape" reaction ratio correlated with different underlying metabolic dysfunctions.

These differences call for precision medicine and targeted preventative measures. Some people might need weight loss. Others might need exercise. Yet others may need sleep – something that lowers blood glucose levels across the board.

"If we understand where the problem lies, we can treat it more effectively," Perelman said.

The researchers are looking for markers in cells that can identify these problems more easily through simple blood tests.

In the meantime, continuous glucose monitoring offers actionable information for people who want to be proactive about their metabolic health.

"You see what spikes you, you see what doesn't spike you, so you eat what doesn't spike you," Snyder said.

After the study wrapped, the Toms obtained their own monitoring devices. Vera, 71, reacted moderately to her data; Randy took things further.

He avoided foods that caused sustained spikes in his blood sugar and joined a master's swimming team. The retiree and part-time model dropped 25 extra pounds, shed numbers from his high cholesterol count and reversed his prediabetic condition.

"I don't think people know that you can reverse it," he said. "It's just hard to do. You don't just take a pill."

Last fall, continuous glucose monitors became available over the counter. A drawback is the $80 monthly cost because insurance only covers the devices for diabetics.

Snyder, who wears multiple devices tracking his body's functions and removes them only before getting weighed, thinks everyone should try one.

Perelman said the monitors are not a replacement for clinical consultation. McLaughlin added that the devices can yield false metrics in certain situations.

The next phase of the research will test different foods and "mitigators" – proteins or fats that can lower blood sugar fluctuations when consumed with carbohydrates. Toasted bread, for example, is easier on the system for some people when eaten with meat or a fat source like heavy cream. Mitigators don't work as well for people with metabolic disorders – another crumb for research. Cornflakes and milk? Bad for nearly everyone.

This time, study participants will receive interventions, from medicine to personalized instructions for diet and lifestyle modifications.

Perelman said, "I want people to know that there's delicious food that's incredibly healthy."

Maybe it's not just aging – maybe it's anemia

By PAULA SPAN
KFF Health News (TNS)

Gary Sergott felt weary all the time. "I'd get tired, short of breath, a sort of malaise," he said. He was cold even on warm days and looked pale with dark circles under his eyes.

His malady was not mysterious. As a retired nurse anesthetist, Sergott knew he had anemia, a deficiency of red blood cells. In his case, it was the consequence of a hereditary condition that caused almost daily nosebleeds and depleted his hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells that delivers oxygen throughout the body.

But in consulting doctors about his fatigue, he found that many didn't know how to help. They advised Sergott, who lives in Westminster, Maryland, to take iron tablets, usually the first-line treatment for anemia.

But like many older people, he found a daily regimen of four to six tablets hard to tolerate. Some patients taking iron complain of severe constipation or stomach cramps. Sergott felt "nauseated all the time." And iron tablets don't always work.

After almost 15 years, he found a solution. Michael Auerbach, a hematologist and an oncologist who is the co-director of the Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders in Baltimore, suggested that Sergott receive iron intravenously instead of orally.

Now Sergott, 78, gets an hour-long infusion when his hemoglobin levels and other markers show that he needs one, usually three times a year. "It's like filling the gas tank," he said. His symptoms recede, and "I feel great."

His story reflects, however, the frequent dismissal of a common condition, one that can not only diminish older adults' quality of life but also lead to serious health consequences, including falls, fractures, and hospital stays.

Anemia's symptoms – tiredness, headaches, leg cramps, coldness, decreased ability to exercise, brain fog – are often attributed to aging itself, William Ershler, a hematologist and researcher said. (Some people with anemia remain asymptomatic.)

"People say, 'I feel weak, but everybody my age feels weak,'" Ershler said.

Even though hemoglobin levels are likely to have been included in their patients' records, as part of the complete blood count, or CBC, routinely ordered during medical visits, doctors often fail to recognize anemia.

"The patients come to the clinic and get the blood tests, and nothing happens," he said.

Anemia affects 12.5 percent of people over 60, according to the most recent survey data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, and the rate rises thereafter.

But that may be an underestimate.

In a study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, Ershler and his colleagues examined the electronic health records of almost 2,000 outpatients over 65 at Inova, the large health system based in Northern Virginia from which he recently retired.

Based on blood test results, the prevalence of anemia was much higher: About 1 in 5 patients was anemic, with hemoglobin levels below normal as defined by the World Health Organization.

Yet only about a third of those patients had anemia properly documented in their medical charts.

Anemia "deserves our attention, but it doesn't always get it," said George Kuchel, a geriatrician at the University of Connecticut, who wasn't surprised by the findings.

That's partly because anemia has so many causes, some more treatable than others. In perhaps a third of cases, it arises from a nutritional deficiency – usually a lack of iron, but sometimes of vitamin B12 or folate (called folic acid in synthetic form).

Older people may have decreased appetites or struggle to shop for food and prepare meals. But anemia can also follow blood loss from ulcers, polyps, diabetes, and other causes of internal bleeding.

Surgery can also lead to iron deficiency. Mary Dagold, 83, a retired librarian in Pikesville, Maryland, underwent three abdominal operations in 2019. She remained bedridden for weeks afterward and needed a feeding tube for months. Even after she healed, "the anemia didn't go away," she said.

She remembers feeling perpetually exhausted. "And I knew I wasn't thinking the way I usually think," she added. "I couldn't read a novel." Her primary care doctor and Auerbach both advised that oral iron was unlikely to help.

Iron tablets, available over the counter, are inexpensive. Intravenous iron, becoming more widely prescribed, can cost $350 to $2,400 per infusion depending on the formulation, Auerbach said.

Some patients find a single dose sufficient, while others will need regular treatment. Medicare covers it when tablets are hard to tolerate or ineffective.

For Dagold, a 25-minute intravenous iron infusion every five weeks or so has made a startling difference. "It takes a few days, and then you feel well enough to go about your daily life," she said. She has returned to her water aerobics class four days a week.

In other cases, anemia arises from chronic conditions like heart disease, kidney failure, bone marrow disorders, or inflammatory bowel diseases.

"These people don't lack iron, but they're not able to process it to make red blood cells," Kuchel said. Since iron supplements won't be effective, doctors try to address the anemia by treating patients' underlying illnesses.

Another reason to pay attention: "Loss of iron can be the first harbinger of colon cancer and stomach cancer," Kuchel pointed out.

In about a third of patients, however, anemia remains frustratingly unexplained. "We've done everything, and we have no idea what's causing it," he said.

Learning more about anemia's causes and treatments might prevent a lot of misery down the road. Besides its association with falls and fractures, anemia "can increase the severity of chronic illnesses – heart, lung, kidney, liver," Auerbach said. "If it's really severe and hemoglobin goes to life-threatening levels, it can cause a heart attack or stroke."

Among the unknowns, however, is whether treating anemia early and restoring normal hemoglobin will prevent later illnesses. Still, "things are happening in this field," Ershler said, pointing to a National Institute on Aging workshop on unexplained anemia held last year.

The American Society of Hematology has appointed a committee on diagnosing and treating iron deficiency and plans to publish new guidelines next year. The Iron Consortium at Oregon Health & Science University convened an international panel on managing iron deficiency and recently published its recommendations in The Lancet Haematology.

In the meantime, many older patients can gain access to their CBC results and thus their hemoglobin levels. The World Health Organization defines 13 grams of hemoglobin per deciliter as normal for men, and 12 for nonpregnant women (though some hematologists argue that those thresholds are too low).

Asking health care providers about hemoglobin and iron levels, or using a patient portal to check the numbers themselves, could help patients steer conversations with their doctors away from fatigue or other symptoms as inevitable results of aging.

Perhaps they're signs of anemia, and perhaps it's treatable.

"Chances are, you've had a CBC in the last six months or a year," Kuchel said. "If your hemoglobin is fine, great."

But, he added, "If it's really outside the normal boundaries, or it's changed compared to a year ago, you need to ask questions."

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Dogs help people regulate stress even more than expected, research shows

Getty Images

By KEVIN MORRIS and JACI GANDENBERGER
University of Denver
(The Conversation)

In a 2022 survey of 3,000 U.S. adults, more than one-third of respondents reported that on most days, they feel "completely overwhelmed" by stress. At the same time, a growing body of research is documenting the negative health consequences of higher stress levels, which include increased rates of cancer, heart disease, autoimmune conditions and even dementia.

Assuming people's daily lives are unlikely to get less stressful anytime soon, simple and effective ways to mitigate these effects are needed.

This is where dogs can help.

As researchers at the University of Denver's Institute for Human-Animal Connection, we study the effects animal companions have on their humans.

Dozens of studies over the last 40 years have confirmed that pet dogs help humans feel more relaxed. This would explain the growing phenomenon of people relying on emotional support dogs to assist them in navigating everyday life. Dog owners have also been shown to have a 24 percent lower risk of death and a four times greater chance of surviving for at least a year after a heart attack.

Now, a new study that we conducted with a team of colleagues suggests that dogs might have a deeper and more biologically complex effect on humans than scientists previously believed. And this complexity may have profound implications for human health.

THE CONVERSATION

How stress works

The human response to stress is a finely tuned and coordinated set of various physiological pathways. Previous studies of the effects of dogs on human stress focused on just one pathway at a time. For our study, we zoomed out a bit and measured multiple biological indicators of the body's state, or biomarkers, from both of the body's major stress pathways. This allowed us to get a more complete picture of how a dog's presence affects stress in the human body.

The stress pathways we measured are the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal, or HPA, axis and the sympathoadrenal medullary, or SAM, axis.

When a person experiences a stressful event, the SAM axis acts quickly, triggering a "fight or flight" response that includes a surge of adrenaline, leading to a burst of energy that helps us meet threats. This response can be measured through an enzyme called alpha-amylase.

At the same time, but a little more slowly, the HPA axis activates the adrenal glands to produce the hormone cortisol. This can help a person meet threats that might last for hours or even days. If everything goes well, when the danger ends, both axes settle down, and the body goes back to its calm state.

While stress can be an uncomfortable feeling, it has been important to human survival. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors had to respond effectively to acute stress events like an animal attack. In such instances, over-responding could be as ineffective as under-responding. Staying in an optimal stress response zone maximized humans' chances of survival.

More to the story

After cortisol is released by the adrenal glands, it eventually makes its way into your saliva, making it an easily accessible biomarker to track responses. Because of this, most research on dogs and stress has focused on salivary cortisol alone.

For example, several studies have found that people exposed to a stressful situation have a lower cortisol response if they're with a dogthan if they're alone – even lower than if they're with a friend.

While these studies have shown that having a dog nearby can lower cortisol levels during a stressful event, suggesting the person is calmer, we suspected that was just part of the story.

What our study measured

For our study, we recruited about 40 dog owners to participate in a 15-minute gold standard laboratory stress test. This involves public speaking and oral math in front of a panel of expressionless people posing as behavioral specialists.

The participants were randomly assigned to bring their dogs to the lab with them or to leave their dogs at home. We measured cortisol in blood samples taken before, immediately after and about 45 minutes following the test as a biomarker of HPA axis activity. And unlike previous studies, we also measured the enzyme alpha-amylase in the same blood samples as a biomarker of the SAM axis.

As expected based on previous studies, the people who had their dog with them showed lower cortisol spikes. But we also found that people with their dog experienced a clear spike of alpha-amylase, while those without their dog showed almost no response.

No response may sound like a good thing, but in fact, a flat alpha-amylase response can be a sign of a dysregulated response to stress, often seen in people experiencing high stress responses, chronic stress or even PTSD. This lack of response is caused by chronic or overwhelming stress that can change how our nervous system responds to stressors.

In contrast, the participants with their dogs had a more balanced response: Their cortisol didn't spike too high, but their alpha-amylase still activated. This shows that they were alert and engaged throughout the test, then able to return to normal within 45 minutes. That's the sweet spot for handling stress effectively. Our research suggests that our canine companions keep us in a healthy zone of stress response.

Dogs and human health

This more nuanced understanding of the biological effects of dogs on the human stress response opens up exciting possibilities. Based on the results of our study, our team has begun a new study using thousands of biomarkers to delve deeper into the biology of how psychiatric service dogs reduce PTSD in military veterans.

But one thing is already clear: Dogs aren't just good company. They might just be one of the most accessible and effective tools for staying healthy in a stressful world.

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ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

All about the recommended immunization schedules

By SEAN O'LEARY, MD, MPH, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

Jan Sonnenmair / Getty Images / TNS

Priscilla Luna holds her 3-year-old daughter, Avery Dahl, while she gets the MMR vaccine from Raynard Covarrubio at a vaccine clinic on March 1 in Lubbock, Texas.

Experts in vaccines and vaccination – including pediatricians – work together throughout the year to update the Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule for ages 18 years or younger.

The schedule is approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics and based on ongoing reviews of the most recent scientific data for each of the recommended vaccines and other immunizations. To be included in the recommended schedule, the vaccines must be licensed by the Food and Drug Administration.

The schedule also recommends the age when children and teens should receive each vaccine or immunization.

Following this schedule gives children the best protection from diseases. If you have questions about vaccines, don't hesitate to ask your pediatrician. They know your child's health history and can talk with you about specific vaccines.

The current schedule recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics is considered the best way to protect children and keep them healthy. Some children may need additional vaccines beyond the routine schedule. For example, if your child has a chronic condition or takes medicine that weakens their immune system, they may need a booster dose or a different type of vaccine. Your pediatrician can discuss what approach is best.

A vaccine may be given in one or more doses. The timing for each dose of a vaccine is based on what age a child's immune system provides the best protection after vaccination. The schedule is also designed to make sure that we protect children when they are at the highest risk from the diseases we're trying to protect them from. This is why most of the vaccines we give children are when they are very young – that is when most of these diseases pose the highest risk.

Getting your child vaccinated on the recommended schedule is the best way to protect them and keep them healthy. If your child misses a vaccine dose, you don't need to start over. Call your pediatrician's office, and they can schedule the next visit.

It's really not a good idea to spread out or delay vaccines, for several reasons. Children need to get their vaccines on schedule so they can benefit from all the protection that vaccines give. While it may be hard to think about, the fact is that young babies are the ones who get hospitalized and die more often from the diseases we are trying to prevent with vaccines. That's why it's so important to vaccinate them as soon as possible.

Also, the recommended schedule is designed to work best with a child's immune system at certain ages and at specific time intervals between doses. There is no research to show that a child would be equally protected against diseases with a very different schedule. There is also no scientific reason why spreading out the shots would be safer. What we do know, thought, is that any length of time without immunizations is a time without protection against these potentially terrible diseases.

Researchers are always studying how long vaccine protection lasts, how many doses we need and how much time between doses works best. That is why your child needs an influenza shot every year, for example, but for another vaccine, your child may develop lifelong protection from just a few doses spaced months or years apart.

Pediatricians want you to have reliable, complete and science-based information. This allows you to make the best decision for your child about vaccination. Unfortunately, there are a few doctors who go against the existing science, often for personal gain, such as selling books or advertisements on their websites. The overwhelming majority of pediatricians in the United States strongly support following the recommended schedule. Most parents follow the schedule for their kids.

When most people in the community have immunity to a disease, it is less likely for that disease to spread. If many people in a community decide to follow an alternative schedule or skip vaccines, diseases can spread much more quickly. That's what we're seeing with the measles outbreaks currently happening in the U.S.

Multiple shots in one visit do not "overwhelm" a child's immune system. We know vaccines are safe – including when multiple shots are given together. A child's immune system responds to literally thousands of things in the course of a normal day – through crawling around the house, eating and even simply breathing. The proteins – also called "antigens" – that children respond to in vaccines are truly a drop in the bucket compared to normal, everyday exposures.

If your child is sick, talk with your pediatrician. Often, they can still get vaccinated even if they have a mild illness like a cold, earache, low fever or diarrhea. Vaccination does not put any extra burden on the immune system and catching up on vaccines that same day saves time because your child will not need to make an extra appointment.

Smallpox is the only disease that has been eradicated completely by vaccines, so we still need vaccines for the other diseases that can spread in our communities. Vaccines equip our body's immune system so it can recognize, respond, and get rid of an infection.

For example, the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine has worked very well in the U.S. for decades. Lately, fewer people have had all recommended doses of MMR vaccine. This has allowed the illnesses it prevented to start to rise again. The vast majority of people infected with measles in ongoing 2025 measles outbreaks have been unvaccinated.

It is because of vaccines and community immunity that children rarely get serious diseases like tetanus, measles, rubella, meningitis and polio. We cannot predict which children will have a mild case and who will get severely sick when infected. So, we must continue using every tool to protect children, including vaccines.

A vaccine does not cause illness in healthy people because the virus or bacteria in the vaccine is either not alive or very, very weak. Vaccines have active ingredients that give information to your child's immune system, so it knows how to defend itself from these diseases.

There are some vaccines that use a live, weakened virus. This type of vaccine very rarely can cause illness for people who have severe conditions impacting their immune system, like someone being treated for cancer. Their doctor may instead provide a different form of the vaccine or advise them to not get that one vaccine.

And no, vaccines do not cause autism. Children get several vaccines between ages 1 and 2. This is also the time some children start to show symptoms of autism. Although they happen around the same time, one does not cause the other. Through extensive research, science has confirmed that vaccines and autism – or other neurodevelopmental disorders – are not related.

Mild to moderate side effects are a normal and expected part of how vaccines work. Sometimes when you get a vaccine, you may get a fever, soreness at the site of injection or body aches. This is really just a sign of your body's immune system's work. After the vaccine does its job, it quickly leaves your body. The side effects go away shortly, too.

Very rarely, more serious reactions can occur from a vaccine, and pediatricians are trained to recognize these very rare reactions. From decades of research, though, we know that the risks of getting these diseases is far greater. All things considered, the vaccines in the schedule recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics are truly a gift – they help children thrive and grow, which is ultimately the goal of every parent and pediatrician.

Sean T. O'Leary, MD, MPH, FAAP, is a pediatric infectious diseases expert at the University of Colorado. He is the chair of the AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases.

Getty Images

About a third of pregnant women in the U.S. lack sufficient vitamin D to support healthy pregnancies – new research

By MELISSA MELOUGH
University of Delaware
(The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

Children whose mothers had higher vitamin D levels during pregnancy scored better on tests of memory, attention and problem-solving skills at ages 7 to 12 compared with those whose mothers had lower levels. That is a key finding of a new peer-reviewed study that my colleagues and I published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

While vitamin D has long been known for its role in maintaining bone health, scientists have since uncovered its importance in regulating immune function, reducing inflammation and protecting the nervous system. Now, growing evidence – including our new findings – suggest it may also support brain development beginning in the womb.

My team and I found that the link between prenatal vitamin D levels and childhood cognition was strongest among Black families, who also face higher rates of vitamin D deficiency.

This suggests that vitamin D supplementation may be a promising, low-cost strategy to support brain development while reducing racial disparities. Our study also suggested that vitamin D levels early in pregnancy may be most important for childhood cognitive development, highlighting the importance of early action by health care providers.

We analyzed more than 900 mother-child pairs across the U.S. who participated in a large national study called ECHO, short for Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes. We measured vitamin D in the mothers' blood during pregnancy and assessed children's cognitive abilities using a standardized test battery. We also accounted for other important factors that shape childhood development such as the mother's education, neighborhood conditions and the child's age and sex.

This new study builds on our earlier findings that higher vitamin D levels during pregnancy are linked to higher IQ in early childhood and with reduced behavioral problems in middle childhood.

Collectively, these studies suggest that vitamin D plays a crucial role in brain development during pregnancy, with lasting benefits for children's cognitive and behavioral outcomes.

Why it matters

Vitamin D deficiency is a common global problem.

In the U.S., about 42 percent of adults have vitamin D levels below 20 nanograms per milliliter, or ng/ml, a commonly used cutoff for deficiency. About a third of U.S. pregnant women are deficient, and the rates are even higher among Black pregnant women, with 80 percent found to be deficient. This racial difference is partly due to differences in skin pigmentation, as melanin pigment reduces the skin's ability to produce vitamin D from sunlight.

Although we can get vitamin D both from sun exposure and our diets, deficiency is common because these sources don't meet everyone's needs. Sunlight isn't always a reliable source, especially for people with darker skin, those living in northern climates or those who often wear sunscreen or sun-protective clothing. Natural food sources such as fatty fish, egg yolks and certain mushrooms contain some vitamin D, and fortified products such as milk and breakfast cereals help, but not everyone eats enough of these foods to maintain healthy vitamin D levels.

That's why supplements are often necessary and are recommended in many cases by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Although current guidelines recommend that pregnant women consume 600 international units, or IUs, of vitamin D daily, higher doses of at least 1,000 to 2,000 IU are often needed to correct deficiency. On average, U.S. women consume only 168 IU from food and beverages, and many prenatal vitamins providejust 400 IU. This highlights an important opportunity for clinicians to improve screening and support around vitamin D supplementation both before and during pregnancy.

If a simple, low-cost strategy such as prenatal vitamin D supplementation can help support brain development, it may yield lasting benefits for children. Long-term studies have shown that higher cognitive scores in childhood are linked to better memory and reasoning in older age, as well as longer lifespan.

What still isn't known

While our studies have linked higher vitamin D levels in pregnancy to improved cognitive and behavioral development in children, we cannot yet prove that vitamin D is the direct cause.

Therefore, studies called randomized controlled trials – the gold standard of research – are needed to confirm these findings and determine how best to translate them into clinical practice. These studies will be essential for determining the optimal target levels for vitamin D to support brain development in pregnancy.

The Research Brief is a short take on interesting academic work.

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MAYO CLINIC Q&A

Why some men experience urinary leaks – or incontinence

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: This is kind of embarrassing, but, for a while, I've been leaking urine. Can something be done to fix this incontinence problem?

ANSWER: You don't have to live with this issue. The three main types of urinary incontinence are:

- Stress incontinence – due to leakage with activities, such as lifting, climbing stairs or strenuous activity.
- Urge incontinence – related to leakage associated with the feeling or urge to urinate.
- Mixed incontinence – a combination of stress and urge incontinence.

Incontinence can be treated with behavioral changes, exercises, medications, nerve stimulation and injections. Surgical options are also available.

Dreamstime / TNS

Stress incontinence in men

Up to 10 percent of men may experience stress incontinence after prostate surgery due to multiple factors related to the patient's anatomy, prostate cancer and the surgery performed. Ultimately, this leads to a weakened sphincter muscle and laxity of the pelvic floor. The sphincter muscles control the release of urine, and the urethra is the small tube that empties the bladder.

A prostatectomy procedure removes some of the control provided by the prostate and bladder, making the patient reliant solely on the external sphincter muscle.

Normally, the sphincter remains closed as the bladder fills with urine until you can reach a restroom. The weakened muscles and relaxed pelvic floor have trouble holding urine, so any movement that exerts a force on the abdominal and pelvic muscles puts pressure on the bladder and can cause leakage. This force could be sneezing, bending over, lifting or even laughing.

Postsurgery stress incontinence symptoms may resolve on their own with time and pelvic physical therapy. Usually, patients can see continued improvement for 12 months after surgery and try nonsurgical treatments, such as physical therapy, before considering surgical treatment options, such as male urethral slings and artificial urinary sphincters.

Male urethral slings

Male urethral slings are indicated for men with mild to moderate stress urinary incontinence, which is defined as using one to four pads per day. The surgeon uses a synthetic mesh material to create a sling, or hammock, to support and pull the urethra and pelvic floor back toward their original locations. Some slings also provide compression support for the sphincter muscles.

A cystoscopy test will be needed before the surgery to confirm that the sphincter muscles are working.

Male urethral slings are performed as an outpatient procedure, and patients can go home the same day. Heavy lifting and strenuous exercise are restricted for about six weeks. Patients need to be careful when climbing ladders and squatting for about three months after surgery because significant hip flexing can loosen the sling.

About 80 percent of men with male urethral slings see an improvement in their symptoms after surgery, with the majority of them no longer needing pads after surgery.

Artificial urinary sphincters

This surgical procedure is more invasive than male urethral slings and appropriate for men with severe stress incontinence, which is defined as using more than four pads per day. It's also a good option for patients who have damage to sphincter muscles from radiation therapy or a failed male urethral sling.

The placement of artificial urinary sphincters has multiple components. A small cuff is placed around the urethra, replacing the sphincter muscle's function. Tubes connect the cuff to a pressure-regulating balloon placed in the lower pelvic region and a pump in the scrotum. The pump is manually operated to open the cuff on the urethra and allow urine to be released from the body.

Some patients can go home the same day as surgery, while others will require an overnight hospital stay to recover.

After surgery, the artificial urinary sphincter isn't activated for about a month while the body heals. During this time, heavy lifting and exercise are restricted. Patients return to the clinic and are taught how to properly use the device. With proper training and consistent use, artificial urinary sphincters are effective at treating symptoms of severe stress urinary incontinence in men.

Talk with your healthcare team if you're experiencing urinary incontinence symptoms or are concerned about your prostate or urinary health.

– David Yang, M.D., Urology, Mayo Clinic Health System, Mankato, Minnesota

FINANCE

Too many Americans live paycheck to paycheck

This researcher has some ideas to help

By MAX KLAVER
Miami Herald (TNS)

For all the change constantly happening in and around the Magic City, many Miamians feel stuck.

More than half of Miami-Dade's population lives paycheck to paycheck. They're spinning their wheels, moving from one day to the next, hoping they avoid the health emergency, job loss, car accident or hurricane that would push them over the financial cliff.

They're surviving, but not thriving. Milestones like homeownership that once felt attainable are out of reach. Now, it's a matter of making rent.

That dynamic is playing out across the country. It's amplified in South Florida. Post-pandemic, the region saw a flood of outside money drive up local income inequality and, with it, prices – especially for housing.

Meanwhile, locals' paychecks haven't kept pace. They're struggling to save, struggling to invest – in stocks or businesses or themselves – and struggling to get ahead.

Heather Cameron is the Michael B. Kaufman professor of practice in social entrepreneurship at Washington University in St. Louis. She just received nearly $1 million in grant money to figure out how to improve economic mobility in American cities.

The Miami Herald sat down with her recently to find out more.

Below is an edited version of a 40-minute interview with Cameron. It touches on why it's harder to get ahead today than it was decades ago, the value of money, a different way to think about housing, and what can be done to make life healthier and more affordable for everyone. The Herald encourages readers to listen to the full interview here:

Q: How do you define economic mobility?

A: Economic mobility is basically just the changing of your economic status over time. It's a key part of the American Dream; the idea that kids can do better than their parents, that we're all improving as a society, and also that if you're born a child into poverty, you don't necessarily have to stay there.

Q: How mobile do you think the United States is today?

A: The Federal Reserve System has noticed that, for the last 30 or 40 years, economic mobility is stagnating in the United States.

Why is this happening? It's because of the way our economy has changed dramatically since the 1970s.

Q: What are some of those changes?

A: After World War II, there were huge investments and growth in the American economy, and most of the money flowing in the economy was actually being used for what we would call productive things. It was industrial capitalism. People made investments into factories. The factories grew bigger. They made more stuff. They got profits from that.

Then, the economy moved more into what we call financial services. The banking system, the insurance system and real estate took over more and more of the economy, and people could make money just by basically owning stuff, not by making stuff, and by charging other people to use it.

Over the last 30 years, people who own assets, whether that be stocks and bonds or real estate, they've been getting a much better return on owning that stuff than people who work. And that leads to income concentrations at the top and at the bottom, and it makes it very hard for the people at the bottom to jump up, because the ladder is expanding.

Q: So your research will examine community wealth building. What is that?

A: Community wealth building is the idea that, if a community controls more of its assets, and more of the money that's generated in the community stays there, then it will do better.

Q: What are some examples of community wealth building strategies you think could be successful or have been successful?

A: Community banks. That's a publicly owned or community-driven bank, and its goal isn't just maximizing profits. They're covering their costs, but they're focusing on investing in local businesses and the needs of residents. So, for example, standing up kindergartens or grocery stores in neighborhoods that need them.

Another strategy is making workers "worker-owners."

Q: How does that work?

A: Right now, there's this huge transfer of wealth happening because so many baby boomers who built up businesses are retiring and realizing that there aren't necessarily people who want to buy their business. And so (some of my research is) going to be looking in Kansas City for different businesses where owners are wanting to retire. They don't want to see their businesses sold for scrap, but rather to be sold to their workers. Then the workers will have the opportunity to build assets through owning part of the business.

We'll also focus on so-called "anchor institutions" – universities, health centers, large employers in the area, organizations that are committed to that city – and come up with strategies for them to be able to buy more of the goods and services they need locally and keep that money flowing in the local community.

Q: Housing is a big issue here in Miami. Most people here are "rent-burdened" and struggle to make ends meet. Some of your research will focus on strategies to make housing more affordable and attainable. Tell me about them.

A: Normally when you buy a house, you're not just buying the house. You're buying the land underneath it. Because of that, the price is obviously a heck of a lot more than if you were only buying the use of the building.

Shared equity models are basically a way for low-income people – who don't have the assets available to put down a big down payment but who do have the money to make monthly rent payments – to have stable housing.

Community groups, like nonprofits, would do something called a " community land trust," which is basically a way to avoid gentrification. Locals who want to stay where they are but who can't afford to buy the houses, or who are having the houses bought out from under them, can come together and say, "Hey, we should protect our neighborhood by turning it into a community land trust."

People are able to buy into (the housing on that land), but the amount of upside that they get on their investment in a house on that land is capped. The advantage is that they can get a house and have all the nice things about being in a house and having a nice neighborhood. But, because it's not floating on the free market, the amount of upside they get is capped, because they would sell [the house] back to the group they bought it from.

The goal is to make it easier for people to get access to housing. And so the way they do that is to keep it permanently affordable and off the private market.

Q: So, if I understand correctly: nonprofits and/or individuals in a community form a land trust. That trust buys a plot of land. Let's say the trust, which is governed by a community board, decides to construct a building on that land. People buy units in that building, or a house on that land, but there's a limit to how much they can resell them for, and that keeps the housing affordable?

A: Right. There'll be rules about what your income has to be in order to buy in. We can get more people into high quality, stable housing, if the goal is not just capital appreciation on the house.

Q: Especially in Miami, housing is often purchased explicitly for its appreciative value. People want the value of their homes to go up as much as possible, which goes against the concept you just outlined. So how have people received this idea?

A: To make our economy work better for people requires people to think differently about what money is for and what the economy is for and what housing is for. There's a lot of people who are currently renting in a very insecure way, spending more than a third of their income on rent, which causes problems for their families, for their kids, which causes extra stress.

If you told those people, who are hard-working and who have access to money to pay rent, "you could buy this studio apartment that you're living in. You'll be part of a housing community where there are rules, but you'll help shape those rules. You'll have stability – what you pay isn't going to change in an unexpected way just because the landlord said so," they would jump at that.

And if they have extra money, then great, put it in the stock market. That's where we should be investing money. In the American economy. That would be my argument as an entrepreneur. Let's go build stuff to make more profit. Let's go create more innovations. Not just, I buy a house, you buy a house, we trade and we 'make' money.

Housing can be seen not just as a speculative investment, but as something we need to have safe and healthy neighborhoods. We don't want people changing homes three times in one school year. We don't want neighborhoods that are broken down because the neighbors don't trust or know each other. We want places that are clean and healthy and walkable and good for families. Where people can build up as they go, rather than needing to have a whole bunch of money just to jump in and then be afraid that if they miss one payment, it'll be taken by a bank – which doesn't work to help them keep their home but is interested in selling it to the next guy.

Q: Practically speaking, how do these cooperative projects get off the ground? Who makes them happen?

A: Lots of different people. There are banks and investment funds that do mission-driven finance. But even the big hedge funds are talking about the value of shared ownership and employee ownership as a way to unlock value for American companies, to get more people in the owner's box, getting them committed to improving companies because they're owners.

In terms of the housing stuff: Generally, neighborhood organizations work with city governments or philanthropic organizations to stabilize neighborhoods and create opportunities for people to get into homes while avoiding gentrification. They come together to get a loan against the value of the land, and then they put houses or multi-family units on [the land]. Then, they're able to service that loan in perpetuity by the payments of the people who live there. Lots of banks have worked to help create these community land trusts because they see the value in stable neighborhoods for the greater community.

And people are starting to do this in commercial real estate, too. There's a project in Portland where a community development fund bought a mall in a low-income area and turned it into a place where local small businesses could have their stores. People in the neighborhood and surrounding zip codes had the opportunity to buy into the community fund, and now they get a share of those rents. It's a question of how you get the money together. Their model was a whole bunch of people paying a small amount, plus initial startup money.

It's just smarter ways of putting money to work. These things don't really require a huge amount of money. It's more technical know-how and willingness to learn from these examples, which are all over the United States, but not yet enough. We can do even more.

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Building wealth is a methodical process that involves accumulating assets, reducing debt and consistently making wise financial choices over time.

7 strategies to build wealth

By RACHEL CHRISTIAN
Bankrate.com (TNS)

In a world of instant gratification, the journey to wealth stands out. It's about consistent, deliberate choices, not jumping from one financial fad to another.

While many people dream of getting rich, building wealth is something different. Getting rich often implies a sudden windfall, like a lottery win or an unexpected inheritance. It's an infusion of cash that can quickly elevate your lifestyle, but it doesn't guarantee long-term financial stability.

Building wealth, on the other hand, is a methodical process that involves accumulating assets, reducing debt and consistently making wise financial choices over time. It's about creating a strong foundation that will support you and your family for years to come.

"For most people, wealth is a get-rich-slow scheme," says Joe Conroy, CFP and owner of Harford Retirement Planners. "It happens through consistent behavior compounded over time."

While wealth creation may not happen overnight, there are steps you can take to set you on the path to long-term financial success.

1. Create a financial plan

Building wealth starts with creating a solid financial plan. Think of it as the foundation of your wealth-building journey.

A financial plan is a comprehensive document that outlines your income, expenses, debts and assets.

Once you have a firm grasp on your current situation, the next step is to set both short-term and long-term goals. Why do you want to build wealth? Do you want to retire early or donate a large portion of your money to charity? Do you want to buy a big house or start a college fund for your kids?

Be specific about how much money you'll need to realize each goal and set a time frame for achieving it. Then, outline the specific steps you'll need to take to accomplish your goals.

You can also work with a financial advisor to help develop your plan. A trained professional can provide expert insight on complex financial topics, such as investment options, tax-loss harvesting and risk management.

As you search for a financial advisor, look for one with a fiduciary duty, which means they're looking out for your best interest. Ask them questions about their recommendations and make sure you understand their payment structure, so you're not hit with any hidden costs.

2. Start budgeting

Making a budget is essential to building wealth. It helps you understand where your money goes, avoid overspending and identify funds you can allocate toward saving and investing. Here's how to create a budget in a few simple steps.

"I've heard of folks who make $500,000 a year and miss mortgage payments because they never made saving first, spending second a priority," says Conroy.

To start, look at your finances to see how much money you earn and how much you spend. Next, identify changes you can make to increase your income or decrease your expenses. This might mean making small changes, like packing a lunch instead of eating out, or big changes like moving to a cheaper apartment.

One popular rule of thumb for budgeting is the 50/30/20 rule. It states that you should allocate 50 percent of your income toward needs, 30 percent toward wants and 20 percent for savings and investing.

3. Maximize your savings

To help you stay committed to your savings goals, have money automatically deducted from your paycheck or checking account each month. This puts your savings on autopilot so you won't be tempted to spend it.

Make sure to establish an emergency fund as well if you don't have one already. This cash reserve should equal three to six months (or more) of living expenses, and you'll need it if something unexpected arises, like car repairs or a busted water heater. An emergency fund helps you avoid taking on high-interest credit card debt and protects your credit score.

Where you put your savings also matters. For your emergency fund and short-term savings goals like buying a home, a high-yield savings account is a great option. These accounts are offering their highest rate in years, thanks to a series of interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve.

Things change, so it's important to revisit your savings plan at least once a year. Consider putting part of any windfall – such as a tax refund or a bonus at work – toward your savings. Adjust your goals, contributions and accounts as you earn more. This way, you'll stay on track toward building the wealth you've been working so hard for.

4. Manage debt

Getting your debt under control is essential to building wealth. You don't have to eliminate all the debt in your life right away, but paying off high-interest credit cards and personal loans should be a top priority.

"Think of building wealth like running a 5k and any debt you may have is like a weight around your ankle," says Conroy. "Can you finish a 5k with weights around your ankle? Sure. Can you run as fast and efficiently? No chance."

If you're trying to eliminate debt, consider picking a debt management strategy – such as the debt snowball or debt avalanche method – and select a debt-payoff date to keep you motivated.

You can also use budget calculators, repayment calculators and financial planning apps to track your progress. Another option is trying to negotiate with your creditors to lower your monthly payments or reduce your interest rates.

5. Invest

Investing puts the money you save to work, increasing your wealth. It's also the most effective way Americans can build their net worth and achieve long-term goals like retirement.

The stock market is an ideal place for long-term investments. While saving money is important, you risk losing purchasing power over time due to inflation, which is why it's vital to invest as well.

In many ways, investing is more accessible and more affordable than ever. You can open a brokerage account online in minutes and start investing with very little money. Most brokers no longer charge commissions, and you can even hire a robo-advisor for a low monthly fee to pick the investments for you.

To protect your wealth, ensure your portfolio is diversified. This means owning a mix of different assets that don't necessarily move in the same direction at all times. A financial advisor can help you pick investments that align with your goals.

Here's more information about different investments and their role in a diversified portfolio.

Stocks: Stocks offer you part ownership in a business, and they're one of the best wealth-building strategies. Stocks can be very volatile, so it's best to hold them in your portfolio for at least three to five years. Here's a primer on how to invest in stocks.

■ Bonds: Bonds are considered a less risky investment than stocks, but they come with lower gains. Bonds tend to be much less volatile than stocks, making them ideal for balancing out a portfolio and generating an income stream. Here's how bonds work and how to use them to build wealth.

■ Mutual funds: A mutual fund is a collection of investments owned by many different investors. You buy shares in the fund, which is diversified among various stocks and/or bonds, reducing your risk and potentially even increasing your returns. While mutual funds offer diversification, they often carry higher fees than ETFs or index funds.

■ ETFs: Exchange-traded funds are similar to mutual funds in that they spread your investment dollars across multiple stocks, bonds or other assets. However, ETFs offer a few advantages over mutual funds, namely very low management fees.

6. Understand tax impacts

If you're investing to build wealth, pay attention to the taxes you'll owe on your investments. Thankfully, there are several legal ways to reduce, defer or even eliminate taxes on your investment gains and keep more of your profits.

Contributing to a tax-advantaged retirement account, such as a traditional IRA or workplace 401(k), is one way to defer taxes until retirement. You'll also enjoy a tax dedication in the current tax year for any contributions you make.

Another option is a Roth IRA or Roth 401(k). Roth accounts don't offer a tax deduction for the current tax year, but investment gains within these accounts are tax-exempt, meaning you can withdraw money from a Roth account without owing taxes.

If you're contributing to a 401(k) plan, make sure you're contributing at least enough to receive the match – it's essentially free money. Over time, aim to max out your retirement contributions.

Another strategy to reduce investment taxes is to buy and hold your investments for at least a year. The IRS taxes long-term capital gains at 20 percent, 15 percent and 0 percent. These rates are usually lower than what you'll pay on short-term capital gains, which are taxed at your ordinary income rate.

7. Insure your wealth

After working hard to build your wealth, you need to protect it. Insurance is one of the most affordable ways to safeguard against financial disasters.

At its core, insurance is simply a promise of reimbursement for a loss in return for a premium paid. You can buy insurance to cover many different kinds of risks, but you can cover your basic needs with home, health and life insurance.

■ Homeowners insurance: Homeowners insurance covers your home and possessions. The personal liability coverage in a homeowners policy protects you from loss resulting from any injuries that may occur on your property. You may also need special insurance for floods, earthquakes or other geographic-specific risks.

■ Health insurance: Your health is an asset. Protecting your health by purchasing the appropriate amount of health insurance can give you peace of mind to focus on other financial goals. Many employers offer additional insurance at a low monthly cost that may also be beneficial, such as long-term disability insurance and critical illness insurance.

■ Life insurance: In the event of your death, life insurance pays money to your beneficiary, which can be a child, spouse or anyone else you choose. Term life insurance, often available through your employer, can offer suitable protection at a low cost.

Bottom line

Building wealth requires discipline to stick to your budget, resist impulsive spending and stay committed to your long-term goals. Don't worry if you're starting out small. The important thing is to make a plan and get started. Remember, building wealth is a marathon, not a sprint.

Key takeaways

■ Unlike getting rich quick, building real wealth is about steady, intentional moves like budgeting, saving, investing and managing debt over the course of many years.

■ A solid financial plan can keep you focused and help you make informed decisions.

■ Put your savings on autopilot and knock out high-interest debt first. An emergency fund and smart budgeting are non-negotiables.

■ Invest early and diversify. Use low-cost ETFs and tax-advantaged accounts, such as a 401(k) or IRAs, to grow wealth.

Editorial Disclaimer: All investors are advised to conduct their own independent research into investment strategies before making an investment decision. In addition, investors are advised that past investment product performance is no guarantee of future price appreciation.

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Summer berry bars with lemon glaze are easier than pie

By GRETCHEN McKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

Summer heat often makes baking less than desirable, so if you're going to heat up the kitchen to make dessert, you gotta make it worth every bead of sweat that collects on your forehead.

These berry crumb bars are worth it and then some.

Built on a forgiving shortbread-like crust (it's supposed to be crumbly) and topped with gooey seasonal fruit, they offer all the great taste of a summer pie but are so much easier to make since you don't have to bother with mixing and rolling out dough.

How easy is this recipe? While a food processor or KitchenAid mixer will certainly speed things along, all you really need to cut in the butter that helps create the crumbly bottom layer is a fork or pastry cutter and some good old-fashioned elbow grease.

I used a mix of blueberries and strawberries because the two fruits have such complementary flavors and are always easy to find, often on sale. Also, two contrasting colors are always more visually appealing in a dessert than one.

If you're worried about the butter and sugar content, at least know this: Both fruits are fairly low-cal and packed with vitamin C and other nutrients. Also, blueberries are famous for their high antioxidant content.

Be sure to allow the bars to cool completely on a wire rack before slicing into squares or they will crumble. The original recipe finished the bars with a simple lemon glaze, but I served them without.

Lemon Strawberry Crumb Bars

Serves 16

3 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup unsalted butter, very cold and cubed
1 large egg
1 large egg yolk
1 cup packed light or dark brown sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 cups chopped strawberries
2 cups blueberries
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 teaspoon lemon zest

FOR OPTIONAL GLAZE:

1 cup confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (about 1 lemon)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line the bottom and sides of a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on the sides to lift the finished bars out. (This makes cutting easier!) Set aside.

Make the crumble mixture for the crust and topping: Whisk flour, baking powder and salt together in a large bowl.

Add cubed butter and using a pastry cutter or two forks, cut in the butter until all the flour is coated and resembles pea-sized crumbles. (I whisked the ingredients together in a food processor.)

Whisk egg, egg yolk, brown sugar and vanilla together in a small bowl. Pour over the flour/butter mixture and gently mix together until the mixture resembles moist, crumbly sand.

Use your hands if needed – the mixture comes together easier with your hands than a spoon.

You will have about 6 cups of the crust/crumble mixture. Set 2 cups aside.

Pour the remaining crumble mixture into the prepared pan and flatten down with your hands or a flat spatula to form an even crust. It will be a little crumbly – that's OK. Set aside.

Make filling: In large bowl, mix strawberries, blueberries, granulated sugar, cornstarch and lemon zest together. Spoon evenly over crust.

Crumble the remaining butter/flour mixture on top and gently press down so it's snug on the strawberry layer.

Bake for 45-50 minutes or until the top is lightly browned and the strawberry filling is bubbling on the sides. (My bars took about 55 minutes.)

Remove from the oven and place the pan on a wire rack. Allow to cool completely.

If adding a glaze, whisk the glaze ingredients together and drizzle on top of the bars (or you can drizzle on individual squares).

Lift the cooled bars out using the overhang on the sides. Cut into squares.

Cover and store leftover bars (with or without icing) at room temperature for up to 2 days, in the refrigerator for up to 1 week and in freezer for up to 3 months (arrange in even layers between sheets of parchment). To serve frozen bars, thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then bring to room temperature before serving.

Adapted from sallysbakingaddiction.com

These crumbly summer berry bars are filled with a mix of strawberries and blueberries.
Gretchen McKay / The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette / TNS

QUICK FIX

Chicken Caprese Salad

By LINDA GASSENHEIMER
Tribune News Service (TNS)

I was craving a light summer salad and decided to elevate a classic caprese by adding sautéed chicken to fresh tomatoes and creamy mozzarella. A handful of fresh basil and a drizzle of light Italian dressing pulled it all together for a quick, refreshing dinner.

It's a simple, satisfying meal that comes together in just ten minutes – perfect for warm evenings.

HELPFUL HINTS:

■ Look for soft mozzarella in one piece for easy slicing.

■ Any type of light salad dressing can be used.

■ Any type of country bread can be used.

Chicken Caprese Salad

Yield 2 servings

2 teaspoons olive oil
3/4 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs
1 teaspoon dried oregano
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 large tomatoes, thick sliced
2 ounces part skim milk mozzarella cheese
2 tablespoons light Italian vinaigrette dressing
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil cut into strips
2 slices whole grain bread 2 ounces

Heat oil in a large skillet and add the chicken thighs. Saute 5 minutes, turn over and saute 3 minutes. A meat thermometer should read 160 degrees. Saute a few more minutes if needed.

Remove to a cutting board and cut into 1-inch pieces and sprinkle with the dried oregano and salt and pepper to taste. Cut tomatoes into 1/4-inch slices and arrange them in two rows on two dinner plates. Cut mozzarella into 1/4-inch slices and place over the tomatoes. Arrange the chicken cubes in the center of the tomato rows. Drizzle the Italian vinaigrette dressing over the tomatoes and chicken. Slice basil leaves into thin strips and sprinkle over the mozzarella. Serve with the bread.

Linda Gassenheimer is the author of over 30 cookbooks, including her newest, "The 12-Week Diabetes Cookbook." Listen to Linda on www.WDNA.org and all major podcast sites. Email her at Linda@DinnerInMinutes.com.

Chicken Caprese Salad.
Linda Gassenheimer / TNS

Lady Gaga performs during her concert at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on May 3.
Pablo Porciuncula / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

The 11 most monstrous moments from Lady Gaga's Mayhem Ball at the Forum

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Three months after her headlining appearance at this year's Coachella festival, Lady Gaga is on the road with an expanded version of the haunted-opera-house spectacular she brought to the desert just after the release of her latest album, "Mayhem." I caught Monday's show at Inglewood's Kia Forum, the first of four through Saturday for the 39-year-old pop superstar, and though I can't say I have any firmer of a grasp on the story she's telling – something about the two halves of a vicious yet empathetic queen? – her commitment to the beauty and the gore of the bit remains steadfast.

Here are 11 of the most memorable moments from Night 1 of Mother Monster's stay in L.A.

1. As she did at Coachella, Lady Gaga opened Monday's gig with the one-two punch of "Bloody Mary" into "Abracadabra" while stationed in an enormous red hoop skirt that turned out (à la Mother Ginger from "The Nutcracker") to conceal a troupe of dancers beneath its folds. It says something about Gaga's creative gumption that such an enthusiastic mover would opt to start this production with use of only the upper half of her body; it says something about her expressive ability – as both a singer and a puller of faces – that she didn't seem particularly constrained by the costume.

2. Ditto the thrashing electro-punk "Perfect Celebrity," which she performed as she lay on her back, half-buried in a sandbox and dry-humping a skeleton.

3. As far as I could tell, no one from California's congressional delegation took in the festivities at the Forum as former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi did last week – from a floor seat, no less – when Gaga played San Francisco's Chase Center. ("The most fun I've had in a long time," Pelosi wrote on X in response to a Pop Crave post noting her attendance.) In their place, though, were a handful of admiring pop stars, including Olivia Rodrigo, Matty Healy of the 1975 and Chappell Roan, the last of whom was seen in the house belting along to "Born This Way."

4. For "Paparazzi," Gaga wore a chrome helmet and hobbled down a long runway using a pair of chrome crutches, the train of her dress billowing heroically behind her. In a show full of detailed tableaux, this was perhaps the most striking.

5. Say this for Lady Gaga: Even as her pop ambitions have grown, she's never made much of an attempt to retcon her beginnings as a horny New York City theater kid. Among the songs she's added to the Mayhem Ball since Coachella are the endearingly goofy "LoveGame," with its single-entendre lyric about wanting to ride somebody's disco stick, and her breakout single, "Just Dance," which she's still introducing – 16 years after it shimmied to No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 – with a shout-out to her former producer RedOne.

6. When the singer announced this tour in March, she framed her decision to play arenas instead of stadiums as an artistic decision – the product of her desire to do something "more intimate" than the 2022 Chromatica Ball that stopped at Dodger Stadium. Often, the "I" word is a pop star's way of managing expectations. Yet here she actually did attain a sweaty sense of connection in another oldie, "Summerboy," which she sang while slashing at an electric guitar as half-dressed dancers writhed around her under a bank of clubby red lights.

7. "Mayhem's" sweet spot comes in the middle of the album with a string of funky '80s-throwback jams – "Killah" into "Zombieboy" into "LoveDrug" – that Gaga delivered onstage in an ornate Cruella de Vil getup. A nagging question, though: Why hasn't she released one of these tunes as a single? Sure, "Abracadabra" (which dropped in February) still turns up pretty frequently on the radio. And Gaga and Bruno Mars' "Die With A Smile" will probably never leave the airwaves. But the lack of a big push for any of "Mayhem's" remaining Top 40 candidates feels like a weird choice for an LP as stacked as this one.

8. Gaga's country power ballad "Million Reasons" remade as a creepy church-organ processional? Yes, please.

9. That long runway became a short river for "Shallow," which Gaga performed (in a moody new electro-goth arrangement) as a swooning damsel on a gondola cutting through foggy waters. Big Christine Daaé energy.

10. Having soaked up a full minute's worth of applause after "Die With A Smile," Gaga let the place quiet down so that she could give a little speech. "Before the show tonight, I had a chat with everybody backstage," she told the crowd. "I was like, 'It's Monday – I don't know what's gonna happen.' You all f------ showed me. You came out here blazing, ready to go. L.A. has been a real interesting place in my life, because I grew up in New York City. I grew up in New York, and I moved out here when I was like 19 years old. And it was not always easy. I just want to say thank you for everybody in this room tonight. People didn't always believe in me out here – you believed in me so much tonight. Thank you. You were always there for me.

"I come out here every night, and I always promise myself I'm gonna be really strong during this part, and I always lose it because I don't know how to say thank you in enough ways," she continued. "Think it always just felt easier for me to put it in a song. But community – my community, this community, our community – they're there for you even when it's tough and when you're at your lowest. That's why it's so special, 'cause you don't gotta be on top for your community to love you. They will always love you.

"I hope you know everywhere around the world that I go, I will try to give every drop of my passion to the audience. Inspired by all of you that when I come out here, and I see all that passion and all that love you have for me and for each other, it really makes me feel something so special. I hope that all year and all summer, that you feel my love. I'll see you in 20 more years. I'll just keep coming back – is that OK?"

After the speech, the singer dedicated "Vanish Into You" to two of her nieces who'd come to the show. "They said this was their favorite song," she said. "I always dedicate this to the fans. Will you share it with them tonight?"

11. Gaga began her encore with what felt like a callback to that great scene in "A Star Is Born" where she and Bradley Cooper meet for the first time in a dressing room as she's removing her electrical-tape eyebrows. Here she turned up on a giant video screen, singing "How Bad Do U Want Me" while rubbing makeup from her face backstage before making her way through a behind-the-scenes labyrinth to appear in the flesh once more before us.

Scott Yamano / Netflix / TNS

Benito Antonio MartÃnez Ocasio (aka Bad Bunny), left, as Oscar Mejias and Adam Sandler as Happy Gilmore in "Happy Gilmore 2."

MOVE REVIEW

'Happy Gilmore 2' features cameos in a nostalgia driven legacy sequel

By ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News (TNS)

Happy Gilmore is back on the fairway in "Happy Gilmore 2," a nostalgia-fueled, celeb-packed legacy sequel to Adam Sandler's 1996 fan favorite.

If you take away the dozens of cameos – from professional golfers, pro wrestlers, rappers, Sandler family members, "SNL" stars, returning "Happy Gilmore" cast members and various other friends of Sandler – there isn't a whole lot there. But it's a harmless return to the links, if a disappointment to anyone looking for anything more from this round of 18.

It's been years since Happy Gilmore, the wannabe hockey player turned golf legend, has been back on the golf course. He's now an alcoholic who hides booze in any substance with a hollow center, and he's been in a hole of depression since accidentally killing his wife with an errant tee shot. (Sorry Julie Bowen, but she's back in flashbacks.)

Happy's now a single father of five, four rambunctious young men and a daughter (Sandler's real-life daughter Sunny), who is an aspiring ballet dancer. She needs $300,000 to attend ballet school, so Happy has to pick up his driver and return to what he does best.

First he has to get himself cleaned up, which means trips to an AA-like group, led by his old rival Hal L. (Ben Stiller). And he's being courted by Frank Manatee (Benny Safdie), the proprietor of a new golf league, Maxi Golf, which promises more action by making the sport sexier. (Think LIV Golf's challenging of the PGA Tour.)

'Happy Gilmore 2'

Grade: C+

MPA rating: PG-13 (for strong language, crude/sexual material, partial nudity and some thematic material)

Running time: 1:54

How to watch: Netflix

So what of Shooter McGavin (Christopher McDonald), Happy's former tournament adversary? He's been locked up in an insane asylum but is freed when Manatee lets him out, in the hopes of having him challenge Happy once again.

Elsewhere, scenes seem specifically written to give whatever celeb was on set on any given day a laugh line. Eminem plays Donald Jr., the son of the heckler who kept calling Happy "jackass" in the first movie, one of several descendants of original characters. There are also next-generation versions of Happy's mentor Chubbs (Lavell Crawford plays the son of Carl Weathers' character), and Richard Kiel's kindly but menacing Mr. Larson (Boban Marjanovi plays Larson's son). Meanwhile, there are at least three references to the late Bob Barker, who memorably punched out Happy in the original.

"Happy Gilmore 2" is one of those Sandler projects that seems like the experience on set for Sandler's friends and family trumped whatever was happening in front of the cameras, and it certainly looks like Bad Bunny, Travis Kelce, John Daly, Margaret Qualley, Guy Fieri, Post Malone and the rest of the gang had fun making the movie. Director Kyle Newacheck (he also made Sandler's "Murder Mystery") seems like his chief role was that of party host, and the script by Sandler and his frequent partner Tim Herlihy doesn't push any harder than making the first joke that comes to mind and moving forward.

The original "Happy Gilmore" became such a beloved touchstone because it had a serious zany streak running underneath its core of sweetness; it was a key building block in Sandler's eventual big-screen superstardom. "Happy Gilmore 2" is a laid-back round of golf with pals where everyone stops keeping score after the first few holes, and for this mode of Sandler, that's par for the course.

MOVE REVIEW

No shortage of ammo in *'The Naked Gun'* reboot

By MARK MESZOROS
The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio) (TNS)

Everywhere you look, something reminds you of it.

"It," in this case, is the absurdly funny, ridiculously silly 1988 slapstick comedy "The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!" – which saw Leslie Nielsen shine as bumbling detective Frank Drebin. (After the success of their similar-in-tone "Airplane!" in 1980, filmmakers Jim Abrahams and brothers David and Jerry Zucker took Nielsen, an effective supporting player from that riot of a flick, and put him in what proved to be the short-lived comedy TV series "Police Squad!")

And when we say "everywhere," we mean everywhere within the frame of "The Naked Gun," the reboot film hitting theaters this week.

When you heard that Paramount Pictures was relaunching the "Naked Gun" franchise with ageless action star Liam Neeson starring as Police Squad Lieutenant Frank Drebin Jr., you thought, "Well, that COULD be … OK."

Know what? It is … OK.

For a while, in fact, "The Naked Gun" is something better than that, generating laughs, sometimes of the very hearty variety, at an impressive clip. However, as it bangs on through what is a noticeably short runtime of less than 90 minutes, it loses a lot of what passes for its charm, even as it's paying constant homage to the first film and, to a lesser degree, its two sequels.

This fourth "Naked Gun" was developed early on by "Family Guy" mastermind Seth MacFarlane, who directed Neeson in the movies "A Million Ways to Die in the West" (2014) and "Ted 2" (2015). The influence of MacFarlane, who's counted among the producers of "The Naked Gun," shows, with at least a handful of jokes that are cruder than what you got in the earlier movies. Some are downright hilarious, while others go too far.

'The Naked Gun'

★★ ½

MPA rating: PG-13 (for crude/sexual material, violence/bloody images and brief partial nudity)

Running time: 1:25

How to watch: In theaters

Regardless, you can't help but appreciate the way Neeson throws himself into the role, his deadpan-comedy chops apparent from the movie's opening bank-heist scene, much of which was featured in a teaser for the film. Initially disguised as a little girl with a lollipop, Frank Jr. soon is stabbing criminals with it, as well as biting off part of his would-be killer's gun. Hey, we'd never question the action-movie bona fides of the star of 2008's "Taken" and the myriad shooting-and-punching affairs it helped spawn.

What follows in "The Naked Gun" is a steady stream of cops-and-coffee gags – again, many of them landing.

As with the first film, Frank butts heads with a female higher-up; in this case, that's CCH Pounder's Chief Davis, who scolds him for, among other offenses, his violent behavior at a McDonald's. (They wouldn't serve him "freedom fries.") Frank thinks he's essentially above the law – who would even arrest him? Other cops? (Yes is the answer.)

And, similarly, a blond bombshell walks into Frank's life – Pamela Anderson's Beth Davenport, about whose body Frank waxes, um, poetically and whose brother supposedly has committed suicide. She's not buying it, believing he was murdered by a wealthy and powerful Los Angeles businessman, Richard Cane (Danny Huston of "Yellowstone"). Although Frank initially wants her to stay out of his way, they soon team up to investigate Cane and, of course, fall for each other in the process.

Frank Masi / Paramount Pictures via AP

Liam Neeson, left, and Kevin Durand are featured in a scene from "The Naked Gun."

As "The Naked Gun" depends increasingly more on its story – which involves Cane's nefarious plan to use the Primordial Law of Toughness, or P.L.O.T., device to alter society for his benefit – the less enjoyable it becomes. Director Akiva Schaffer, of the Lonely Island comedy-music troupe, and his co-writers, Dan Gregor and Doug Mand, keep firing off jokes, but they less frequently hit their marks.

While Neeson delights, former "Baywatch" star Anderson, who earned praise for her performance in last year's "The Last Showgirl," gives a flat performance. Well, that is aside from a scene in which Beth, needing to distract Cane so Frank can try to check out surveillance footage at a supper club the villain owns, performs an ad-libbed jazz piece and, you know, really explores the space musically.

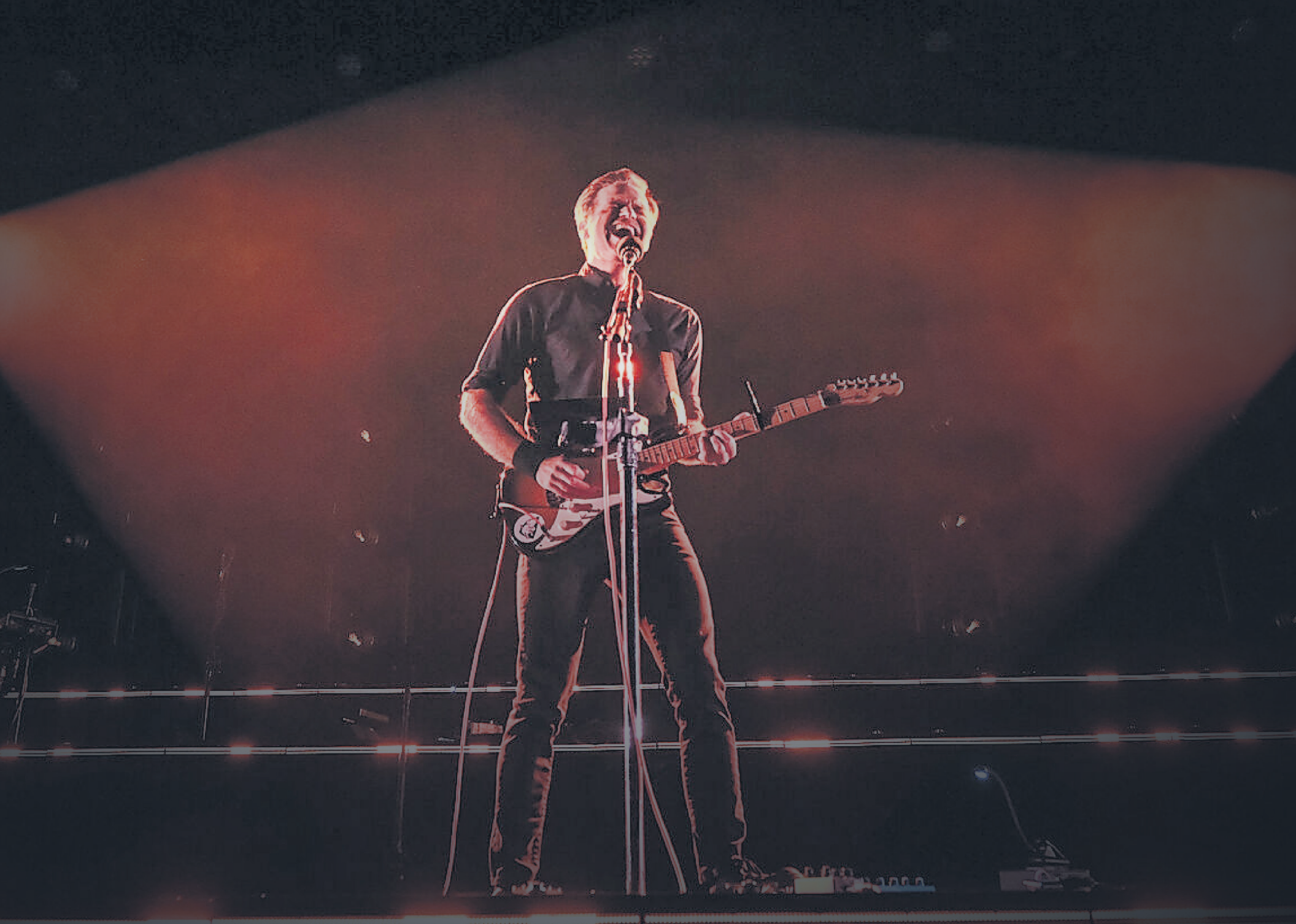
The supporting cast also boasts the dependable Paul Walter Hauser ("Richard Jewell") as Ed Hocken Jr., the son of Frank Sr.'s old partner, Ed. However, while Hauser excels at playing the oddest ball in the room, that's not what he's called upon to do in "The Naked Gun," and his work is entirely forgettable.

An effective early sequence in "The Naked Gun" sees Frank talking to a portrait of his late father at police headquarters, followed by Ed doing the same with one of his. We then see many officers taking part in that ritual, the room being home to many such portraits – including one, awkwardly but appropriately, of the late O.J. Simpson's Detective Nordberg.

Whatever this movie's faults, it's pretty clear MacFarlane, Schaffer and others hold plenty of reverence for the series, so it's a bit of a bummer that David Zucker, for one, has proclaimed he has no intention of seeing it.

If you're a fan of the franchise, it is worth seeing – just keep your expectations at a reasonable level.

It's not, to borrow a phrase from the original, that there's "nothing to see here" and that you should "keep moving." However, there's very little fresh and new to see here, either.



Death Cab for Cutie revisits *'Plans'* 20 years later

By MICHAEL RIETMULDER
The Seattle Times (TNS)

SEATTLE — Two years ago, Death Cab for Cutie embarked on one of the most anticipated indie rock tours in recent memory. The group's coheadlining run with frontman Ben Gibbard's one-off synth-pop band, The Postal Service, marking the 20th anniversaries of their era-defining albums "Transatlanticism" and "Give Up," respectively, was a runaway smash.

As the shows sold out, more and more dates and tour legs were added until it eventually wrapped up last fall. After all the hoopla around The Postal Service reunion and Death Cab playing what's widely considered its masterpiece album in full each night, going too big for the 20th anniversary ofthe band's2005 follow-up, "Plans," seemed like overkill.

"By the end of that tour, we were very pleased and our hearts were full from the response," Gibbard said. "But we felt that to do any more of that might be tipping a little bit too far into celebrating our own nostalgia."

Besides, the Seattle indie rock titans had already earmarked much of 2025 to work on their next record, a follow-up to 2022's "Asphalt Meadows." Still, Death Cab couldn't let the "Plans" milestone pass without "tipping our cap" to the band's major-label debut – an album Gibbard calls "our big coming out party."

On July 31 and Aug. 2, Death Cab opens a limited run of "Plans" anniversary shows with an arena-sized bang, playing the album in its entirety during two hometown dates at Climate Pledge Arena. After the Seattle blowout, Gibbard and company will settle in for longer runs at smaller theaters in Chicago and Brooklyn, mixing in a one-off non-"Plans" date supporting My Chemical Romance at MetLife Stadium. (The pop-punk juggernauts recently began a blockbuster album tour of their own, celebrating their seminal "The Black Parade" with a devilishly over-the-top Seattle kickoff.)

The album anniversary tours have become an increasingly common trend, a move that stirs excitement among die-hards and casual fans alike. As much as it is fan service, it's also savvy marketing amid a saturated post-pandemic touring landscape, as the Death Cab-Postal Service team-up proved.

But on a personal level, revisiting Death Cab's seminal albums offers bassist and co-founder Nick Harmer a chance to "reflect on how far we've come," filling him with gratitude for the band's longevity.

"It's as close to getting into a time machine as I'll ever get into in my life," Harmer said. "I'm finding these emotionally and spiritually fulfilling endeavors."

If "Transatlanticism" was Death Cab's breakthrough album and most critically revered work, "Plans" pushed the Bellingham-formed band further into the mainstream consciousness amid a national indie rock boom. The piano-heavy collection, which also saw thegroupplaying with electronic elements and more production techniques, spawned some of their biggest songs – including set list staples "Soul Meets Body" and tender acoustic hit "I Will Follow You into the Dark." It took them to "Saturday Night Live" and led to their first Grammy nomination in 2006.

Conceived on a condensed timeline after the heaviest touring Death Cab had done at that point,Planswas a pivotal, whirlwind time for the band, rounded out by drummer Jason McGerr and producer/guitarist Chris Walla, who left the group in 2014. Ahead of the "Plans" shows in Seattle, we caught up with Gibbard and Harmer separately to discuss that transformative period of Death Cab for Cutie, unglamorous Grammys moments and revisiting the band's past while keeping their eyes on the road ahead. These conversations have been edited for length and clarity.

As a band, how do you try to balance honoring your past without becoming mired in it?

BEN GIBBARD: There are a lot of bands that have been very good at finding that balance. The Cure has been that band for me.

We are first and foremost music fans. One of the litmus tests we always give ourselves when planning anything as a band is, what would we want from our favorite bands? The Cure is a very (good) example, like if it's the 30th anniversary of "Disintegration" going by and you're like, "Man, what would I want The Cure to do?" I want him to go play "Disintegration," you know? But I also want to hear a new record.

When we think about our favorite bands and what if we could pull the levers on their decision making, what would we do as fans? We try to apply a level of that to our own decision making.

Nick Harmer: I feel like we've found a nice spot. For us, it's kind of exciting to just play a handful of shows and play this album in a few places that are meaningful and kind of leave it at that.

What do you enjoy about playing these full-album shows?

GIBBARD: I love them because people know what's coming. I'm sure we've all had this experience: You go to see a band that you're really excited about and you're like, "Oh man, I hope they play that song from that one record. Oh, they didn't play it tonight." There is a guessing game and anticipation about what the band is going to play that night. But the full-album performance is really fun for us because you can sense that the audience knows what's coming next and you can feel that anticipation and excitement building – especially if we're building toward a song that is a cornerstone on the record.

Any deeper cuts off "Plans" you're excited to dust off?

HARMER: There are a few songs I don't think we played live much, even when "Plans" came out. I have always loved the album closer, "Stable Song." It's not the most anthemic, electric, big thing like (frequent set closer) "Transatlanticism" or something. But I love the sentiment of it. It's one that we probably wouldn't fold into a set in any other capacity.

Gibbard: On every record, there are songs that I absolutely adore and songs that I have come to be ambivalent of. And then there's a couple songs I kind of hate now. I'm not going to tell you which ones those are on "Plans," of course, but I will say that there are a couple of songs that I really dislike and I'm very curious to see how they go over live.

After the success of "Transatlanticism," you signed with Atlantic Records and presumably the stakes and expectations were higher. What was your head space like when you started working on "Plans?"

GIBBARD: At the time, I was really trying to sell the narrative that this is just another record and yeah, we're on Atlantic, but whatever, we're just making a record and it's still Death Cab. And all that was true.

But the time that I had to write for that record became really crunched. I was really burning the midnight oil, so to speak, trying to write songs for "Plans" and I was feeling pretty shaky going into that record. I felt like we had the "hit" we needed in "Soul Meets Body." When I wrote that one, I think I told somebody at the label rather gregariously, and maybe a little egotistically, "I got the hit." But turns out I did. I also thought "Crooked Teeth" would be kind of a hit and it wasn't.

HARMER: There was definitely this momentum that had its own energy. And a lot of that was just us buckling up and riding that momentum and going with the flow of what seemed to be happening organically with the trajectory of our band at that time. We didn't talk about the future very much back then. We were never really like a goal-oriented band that sat down and were like, "This is what we want to accomplish." And we still aren't in that sense.

What do you remember about your first Grammys experience?

GIBBARD: They give away like 95 percent of the Grammys in like a conference center before the actual TV show, so our award was during that. We were in Sweden on tour, and we flew back for the Grammys. The label is like, "It's really important you guys be there." We had suits made.

We were really excited, even though the Grammys were never something that any of us ever (expletive) cared about. We got there and we're like, "Oh my God, there's no food. We're starving." The Arcade Fire dudes were like "We're (expletive) starving, too!" Somebody went and got us pizzas, and we were sitting on the floor together of this (convention center), both up for the same award, which we lost to White Stripes for "Get Behind Me Satan" – which I don't mind losing to White Stripes.

But the image I remember, these two bands of, like, indie people sitting on the floor being like, "What in God's name is this thing? This is not where we come from."

Death Cab for Cutie front man Ben Gibbard opens up the show at Climate Pledge Arena on Oct. 6, 2023. Indie band Death Cab For Cutie headlined Climate Pledge Arena that Friday in a concert that included Postal Service, and the Beths.
Dean Rutz / The Seattle Times / TNS

What was it like adjusting to being in the public eye?

GIBBARD: We worked so hard promoting that record. When we signed to Atlantic, we (decided) we're not going to be one of those bands signed to a major label and decide that we feel more comfortable in our little indie world doing our little indie things. We want to do all the press, the TV, the radio stuff. And it worked out for us.

But also, all that work and all that coping, I chose to cope with alcohol – coping with just the sheer amount of work, trying to come down or trying to get up or whatever. At the time, Seattle started to feel like it was closing in on me a little bit. I started to feel a little self-conscious everywhere I went because I didn't feel like a famous person, but at times I was treated like one.

There are, of course, nice things that happen to you when you are treated like a famous person and also some not-so-nice things. And I found myself really being pulled down by the negative things more than I was lifted up by the positive ones.

What got you over the hump?

GIBBARD: Quitting drinking was certainly No. 1 (laughs). When "Plans" came out, I was 29, and I was insecure in a way that when all the spotlights get shined on you, it doesn't necessarily build you up. It makes you feel even more self-conscious and insecure.

But over the years, I've of course learned to understand that this is just part of the deal. We were all fortunate to have each other. We all got through it together, and it really strengthened the bond that we had together, even in the difficult times. Even though Chris hasn't been in the band since 2014, we still talk and everybody's cool. It was a crazy time in our lives, and I'm really glad we have an opportunity to revisit it with the people who were there with us or who maybe never got to see it in the first place.

Evening Standard / Hulton Archive / Getty Images / TNS

English jazz singer Cleo Laine, with a group of musicians in the United Kingdom on June 1, 1974.

Was Cleo Laine, dead at 97, a great jazz singer? **Not according to her**

By GEORGE VARGA
The San Diego Union-Tribune (TNS)

SAN DIEGO — The death of Cleo Laine last week at the age of 97 has inspired a slew of admiring headlines for the acclaimed English vocal and theater star, nearly all of them hailing her as a great jazz singer. It's a description Laine, who began performing jazz in 1952, took great exception with.

"I'd had absolutely no experience as a jazz singer then, and I don't consider myself a jazz singer now," she insisted in our 1984 San Diego Union interview, which appears in full below.

"I'm a singer of songs," she continued. "I wasn't singing like the current singers of the day. Although I was really a quite naive country girl, I sang as if I'd lived for a very long time. I was also a contralto, as opposed to a light singer, so I had a weightier voice and this appealed to them."

Her protestations to the contrary, in 1986 Laine became the first British artist to win a Grammy Award in the Best Jazz Vocal Performance, Female, category. Her victory prompted an admiring Ella Fitzgerald to send Laine two-dozen roses and a note that read: "Congratulations, gal – it's about time!"

Laine had previously earned Grammy nominations in the Best Classical Vocal Performance and Best Pop Vocal Performance, Female, categories. She was as adept singing Tin Pan Alley classics as she was essaying Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" and demanding vocal pieces by Charles Ives, Arnold Schoenberg and Robert Schumann.

The daughter of a Jamaican father and an English mother, Laine was born Clementina Dinah Campbell on Oct. 28, 1927. She took piano, dance and vocal lessons as a child, and soaked up everything she could.

"The biggest influence at that time in my life was American film musicals," she said in her Union-Tribune interview. "I went to every one that came to England … every singer and dancer – from Fred Astaire to Louie Armstrong – I adored. I sat in the dark theater thinking, 'Oh, if only someone would give me a chance, I'd be able to do that,' stupidly not realizing that if I practiced more I might get the opportunity!"

That opportunity came in 1952 when she joined the band led by saxophonist John Dankworth. The couple married in 1958 and were together until his death in 2010.

"It was intimidating in a way," Laine recalled of joining Dankworth's group. "In fact, for about two years I didn't have a real conversation with anyone in the band. I was clumsy and gawky – in America, I believe you'd say I was a klutz – but all John wanted was a singer. Luckily, via John, I ironed out the clumsiness."

She also fared very well in the world of theater, earning acclaimed for her roles on London stages and Broadway alike. In 1986, Laine earned a Tony Award nomination for her portrayal of Princess Puffer in the Charles Dickens-based murder saga, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." She later played the Witch in a 1989 touring production of Stephen Sondheim's "Into the Woods."

Laine's singing career saw her perform, usually with her husband, at Carnegie Hall, the Hollywood Bowl, San Diego's Balboa Theater, London's Royal Albert Hall and at other venues around the world.

She collaborated with such varied artists as Ray Charles, flutist James Galway, the London Symphony Orchestra, classical guitarist John Williams, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and many more. In 1997, Laine became the first British jazz artist to be made a dame, the female equivalent of a knight. She performed until she was at least 90 and earned rave reviews for her May 2018 performance at London's Royal Festival Hall.

Laine and her husband were avid arts supporters, as well as performers. In 1970, they opened an arts center called The Stables in Wavendon, England, near their home. It included a 300-seat theater where, in 2001, two of the founders of the rock band The Zombies – keyboardist Rod Argent and lead singer Colin Blunstone – reunited on stage for the first time in decades. that impromptu performance led to a full-scale Zombies' reunion in 2004 that lasted until Argent suffered a stroke last year.

No cause of death has been disclosed as yet for Laine's death. Here is her 1984 San Diego Union interview in full.

Versatile Cleo blends opera, pop and all that jazz

By George Varga, San Diego Union
April 12, 1984

When Cleo Laine says she is not a jazz singer, you'd best believe her.

True, the British-born performer has earned lavish praise for her work in jazz, including Grammy award nominations last year and in 1973; but she has won similar plaudits for singing musicals, opera and pop, as well as challenging classical pieces like Arnold Schonberg's "Pierrot Lunaire." In each instance, she imbues her music with equal passion and conviction, making her one of those rare artists whose abilities are not exceeded by her ambitions.

Together with her husband and bandleader, saxophonist John Dankworth, with whom she will appear tomorrow and Saturday at the California Theater, Laine has compiled an extensive musical resume. She starred in an award-winning London production of the musical "Showboat" and substituted for the legendary Lotte Lenya in the prestigious Edinburg Festival production of Kurt Weil's "The Seven Deadly Sins." She also has recorded duets with an eclectic array of performers, including classical guitarist John Williams, singer Ray Charles, flutist James Galway and actor-pianist Dudley Moore (a member of her husband's group in the 1950s).

"When I was very young, I dreamt of being everything that I am today and more," said Laine in a recent telephone interview from Houston, where she was completing arrangements for her roles as singer and dancer in a ballet scored by her husband for the Houston Ballet.

"As you get older, of course, the realities seep in, but I never, ever lost sight of going on the stage, no matter what. Like most people, I did it willingly without being paid, and probably would still do it if I couldn't get paid. It's just one of those things you just do, because you need to do it. I had no other ambition in my life than to go on stage."

Born Clementina Dinah Campbell in the London suburb of Southall, Middlesex, Laine was encouraged to pursue music from an early age on, both of her father, a Jamaican singer, and her mother.

"When we were very young, my brother and sister and I were given music lessons in piano, singing and dancing," she recalled. "The biggest influence at that time in my life was American film musicals. I went to every one that came to England … every singer and dancer – from Fred Astaire to Louie Armstrong – I adored. I sat in the dark theater thinking, 'Oh, if only someone would give me a chance, I'd be able to do that,' stupidly not realizing that if I practiced more I might get the opportunity!"

After finishing her schooling, Laine worked in a variety of day jobs, although her passion for performing never wavered. An early, short-lived marriage produced one son, Stuart, a graphic designer who now lives near San Francisco ("He's too old for me to tell you his age," she laughs).

In 1952, the songstress joined the John Dankworth Seven – her first professional engagement.

"I'd had absolutely no experience as a jazz singer then, and I don't consider myself a jazz singer now," insisted Laine.

"I'm a singer of songs. I wasn't singing like the current singers of the day. Although I was really a quite naive country girl, I sang as if I'd lived for a very long time. I was also a contralto, as opposed to a light singer, so I had a weightier voice and this appealed to them.

"It was intimidating in a way. In fact, for about two years I didn't have a real conversation with anyone in the band. I was clumsy and gawky – in America, I believe you'd say I was a klutz – but all John wanted was a singer. Luckily, via John, I ironed out the clumsiness."

Six years later, in 1958, Laine and Dankworth married. Soon thereafter, the ambitious singer left her husband's band, contending that her position as a vocalist was secondary to that of the other musicians. A starring role in the play "Flesh to a Tiger" at London's famed Royal Court Theater led to rave reviews, but not to additional work; and it was two years before Laine would again appear as an actress.

Undeterred, she began to perform as a cabaret singer, an endeavor – which, like acting – was entirely new to her. Again, she realized success.

"The big breakthrough came in 1964 when I recorded an album called 'Shakespeare and All That Jazz,'" noted Laine. "It got a five-star review in Downbeat, which opened a lot of doors for me. In a funny sort of way, it enabled me to do more stage work instead of cabaret. I was asked to appear in the Brecht-Weil play 'The Seven Deadly Sins' at the Edinburg Festival, which I did. From that I got a hit record on the pop charts, and at the same time I was working at the Saddler's Wells opera theater in London.

"So, really, from the 'Shakespeare' album, I started leap-frogging from one thing to another and enjoying a very happy, eclectic life."

In an interview several years ago, rock star Pat Benatar, who had been initially trained as an opera singer, acknowledged the difficulty in making the transition from one style to another, specifically citing her need to learn not to enunciate. Did Laine encounter similar difficulties?

"Not really," she replied. "I was never trained as a classical singer. I didn't want to be. Although I went to a classical teacher, I told her I didn't want to acquire a 'produced' voice. Therefore, I didn't get that plummy sound, where everybody has to dot their i's and cross their t's, even though you can't hear the words.

"So when Pat Benatar says she didn't want to enunciate, that's a load of rubbish as far as I'm concerned, because I don't think classical singers enunciate properly anyhow. They're much more concerned with the sound of their voice."

Asked about the advantages of working with her husband, Laine spoke with tangible enthusiasm: "There are great advantages, really. When you're on the road touring, it can be extremely lonely. I know a number of solo performers who have given up touring for that reason.

"Also, he's my musical director, and they're very expensive, and I don't have to pay him!"

Laine and her husband founded the Wavendon All-music Project (or WAP), an ongoing musical education program based in Wavendon, England, that is as eclectic as its two directors.

"We started the WAP 14 years ago to break down the barriers between all kinds of music," she explained. "We discovered that friends of ours like John Williams, Andre Previn, Ray Charles and many others all feel, much like we do, that there is really only one kind of music – good music. Young musicians coming out of music schools should be aware of all the other kinds of music, and should be able to play those other types of music, because 95 percent of them will not play in symphony orchestras or as soloists.

"We have a 300-seat theater near our home in Wavendon, and we put on all kinds of musical programs. We have music courses in classical and jazz and an all-music course. 'Side by Side' by Steven Sondheim first started at Wavendon."

BOOKS

Godzilla turns 70

Iconic monster continues to smash expectations *and* buildings

By ERIK PEDERSEN
The Orange County Register (TNS)

Abrams / TNS

Steve Ryfle remembers scouring the TV Guide each week to find the monster movies and Universal horror films he loved.

"You had to make an appointment with yourself to be by the TV, so it was really special," recalls Ryfle, an author and co-writer of the Emmy-winning documentary "Miracle on 42nd Street" (and, I'll note, a friend since our time as young journalists).

"The Japanese films always appealed to me the most. They were intriguing because they took place in a world that was unfamiliar, a culture that was unfamiliar."

Godzilla, he says, was especially captivating to a dinosaur-loving kid.

"Of course, when you're younger, you're into dinosaurs," he says. "Godzilla seemed like the greatest dinosaur I'd ever seen, and it did all these crazy things, and I just loved it."

But back then, beyond a few fanzines or horror magazines, it wasn't as easy as it is now to find information about less mainstream interests or connect with like-minded fans.

"There really wasn't anything to read about these films in any detail. And I remember as a child asking a bookstore clerk if there were books on Godzilla, and he actually laughed at me and asked why I would ever want to read anything like that," says Ryfle. "That stuck in my brain."

Clearly.

Along with Ed Godziszewski, with whom he co-wrote 2017's "Ishiro Honda: A Life in Film," Ryfle is the co-author of the massive new book "Godzilla: The First 70 Years," a 432-page, nearly 6-pound book filled with stories, interviews, breakout boxes, and more than 900 photos of one of cinema's most enduring figures. The writing duo will be appearing as part of an overall Godzilla onslaught at this year's San Diego Comic-Con.

The book, which features introductions by "Halloween" and "The Thing" directing legend John Carpenter and recurring Godzilla actress Megumi Odaka, is the culmination of an effort by the publisher and Toho Studios to mark the anniversary with the ultimate English-language book examining the narrative and visual history of the films, says Ryfle.

"Dating back to 1954, Godzilla has, of course, gone through all of these different iterations and evolutions and changes and its motivation and its personality and the way it's depicted on screen, and even the techniques that are used to bring it to life," says Ryfle, who points to the recent box office success and critical respect for 2023's "Godzilla Minus One." "I mean, who would have thought 70 years ago that a Godzilla movie made in Japan would win an Academy Award? It would have been impossible, and yet here we are."

"It's a real evolution from the time when these movies were sort of misunderstood and just relegated to the scrap heap of low-budget cinema they were assumed to be."

"Obviously, there are interesting stories to tell about these movies and the people who made them," he says. "It's really kind of a celebration of the people and the culture that they come from. The people who made these movies were proud of the work that they did, because they were basically, by and large, handmade films."

Unlike other schlocky midcentury genre movies, the original Godzilla films reflected Japan's experience during and after World War II. The films were a response not only to the devastation caused by the U.S. detonating atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also to the firebombing of Tokyo in which nearly 300 U.S. planes dropped 1665 tons of napalm on the city, creating a firestorm and killing 100,000 people in what the Truman Library Institute called "the most devastating aerial bombardment in history."

"Godzilla, at its very heart from the very beginning, is a monster rooted in trauma," says Ryfle. "It's also really about that collective experience of the war and the struggle and the hardships that people went through – and also the collective experience of the post-war period when the economy was in shambles and there were food shortages and political unrest and unemployment and deprivation of extreme magnitude."

There are images in the original film that directly correspond to wartime destruction, says Ryfle."When I'm giving talks about the first Godzilla film, I'll show stills of Tokyo on fire," says Ryfle, referring to actual photos taken during wartime bombing raids. "I'll put up these two pictures side by side … it's almost like a mirror image."

As well as exploring the film's inspirations – such as the original "King Kong," which had been a huge success upon re-release just a few years before the initial Godzilla film – Ryfle and Godziszewski did interviews and scoured archives for fresh insights – and found things that surprised them despite having decades of experience writing about the films.

"Ed and I've been writing together for a number of years and working on a lot of different projects. We actually met 30 years ago at the very first Godzilla convention that they had in Chicago," says Ryfle, praising his writing partner Godziszewski as "a legend" when it comes to knowing the topic and where to dig up information.

Not only did they discover the audio elements of the iconic Godzilla roar – many of the monster cries were made with different musical instruments, says Ryfle – but they also learned something surprising about the changing face of Godzilla over the years.

"From 1954 to, say, 1975, the suit looks different pretty much in almost every film, and I always thought that that was on purpose. But no, they actually made the suits, at least for about the first 15 years, from the same mold. They just came out differently every time," says Ryfle, who credits the actor inside the suit, Haruo Nakajima, both for his artistry and his superhuman stamina. "The very first suit was almost unusable. It weighed so much and the interior of it was almost inflexible … the guy tried to walk in it and just tipped over."

"It was impossible to be inside without suffocating if you were in it for more than a few minutes … it was almost a death sentence to do this stuff," says Ryfle, adding that Nakajima would sweat out dozens of pounds during filming. "They would have to pour the sweat out of the suit every day, and then dry out the interior for the next day, because it was just a sauna in there.

Though the "man-in-the-suit" aspect could sometimes be viewed as comical, Ryfle says Nakajima's work was instrumental in the creature's evolution and popularity.

"I attribute a large part of the success of those movies to Haruo Nakajima, who played Godzilla for roughly the first 18 years of the first cycle of Godzilla films," says Ryfle, while also praising the original film's special effects wizard, director and cast. "He was just a wonderful man who died a couple of years ago. He loved his work, and he's largely responsible for the personality that starts to come through."

"He turns Godzilla from a walking nuclear bomb into a character over a period of time," says Ryfle.

While we discussed a range of topics and there's much more in the book, Ryfle summed up the project as we were concluding the conversation.

"Someone asked me, like, what was your goal at the start of it?" he says. "We wanted to make the best Godzilla book for the widest possible audience.

"I've always felt from the beginning that [the films] were unfairly maligned and misunderstood, and that maybe I could help, especially after I started meeting the creators and realizing what passion they had for their work, and starting to understand how culturally specific these films are."

But he also understands another reason for Godzilla's lasting power.

"On a gut level, no matter what's going on in the film and how quote-unquote 'serious' it is as a movie," says Ryfle, "people really want to see the spectacle of Godzilla destroying things."

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, July 19, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. An Inside Job. Daniel Silva. Harper
2. The Enchanted Greenhouse. Sarah Beth Durst. Bramble
3. Three Shattered Souls. Mai Corland. Red Tower
4. Atmosphere. Taylor Jenkins Reid. Ballantine
5. Rose in Chains (deluxe ed.). Julie Soto. Forever
6. The Wedding People. Alison Espach. Holt
7. Never Flinch. Stephen King. Scribner
8. The Girl I Was (deluxe ed.). Jeneva Rose. Mira
9. The Woman in Suite 11. Ruth Ware. Scout
10. Dungeon Crawler Carl. Matt Dinniman. Ace

Hardcover nonfiction

1. The Let Them Theory. Mel Robbins. Hay House
2. The Idaho Four. Patterson/Ward. Little, Brown
3. ArnieTex. Arnie Segovia. DK
4. Don't Believe Everything You Think (expanded ed.). Joseph Nguyen. Authors Equity
5. Algospeak. Adam Aleksic. Knopf
6. Butler. Salena Zito. Center Street
7. The Mission. Tim Weiner. Mariner
8. JFK. J. Randy Taraborrelli. St. Martin's
9. The Wishbone Kitchen Cookbook. Meredith Hayden. Ten Speed
10. Half Baked Harvest Quick & Cozy. Tieghan Gerard. Clarkson Potter

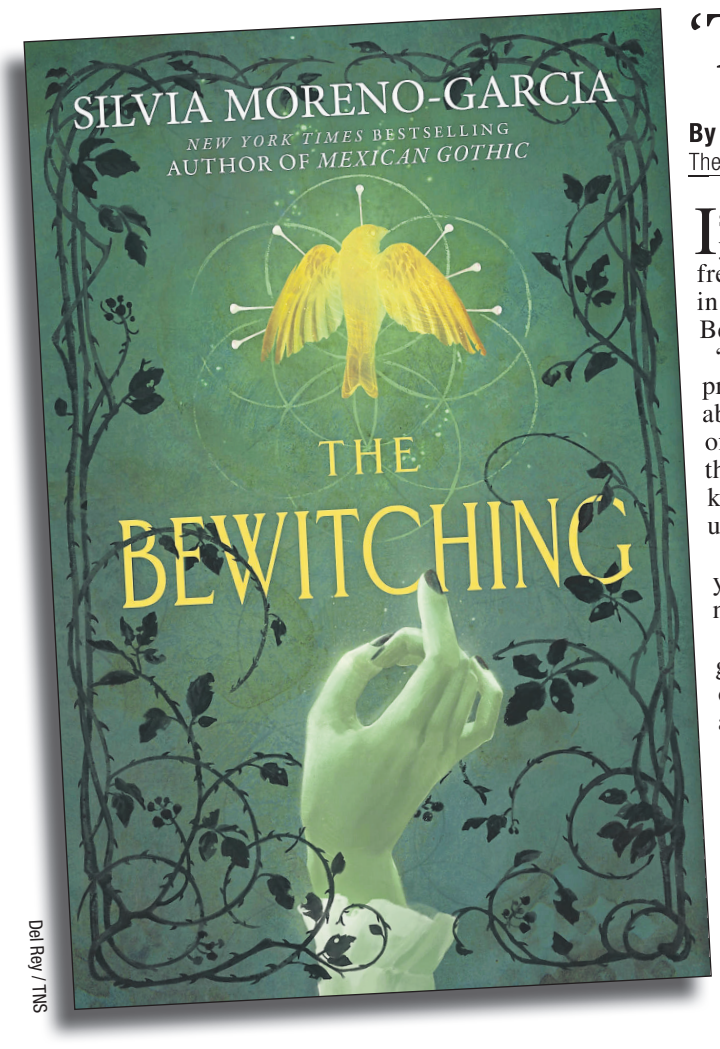
Trade paperback

1. Caught Up. Navessa Allen. Slowburn
2. One Golden Summer. Carley Fortune. Berkley
3. Do Not Disturb. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
4. Lights Out. Navessa Allen. Slowburn
5. A Witch's Guide to Magical Innkeeping. Sangu Mandanna. Berkley
6. The Tenant. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
7. All the Colors of the Dark. Chris Whitaker. Crown
8. Problematic Summer Romance. Ali Hazelwood. Berkley
9. Remarkably Bright Creatures. Shelby Van Pelt. Ecco
10. Fourth Wing. Rebecca Yarros. Red Tower

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

'The Bewitching' novel? More scares, please



Del Rey / TNS

By MAREN LONGBELLA
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Is someone talking smack about you behind your back? Don't fret. Do as a character suggests in Silvia Moreno-Garcia's "The Bewitching":

"It's very easy to cast a spell to prevent people from gossiping about you … You take the tongue of a small animal and drive a nail through it into the ground. Sprinkle a smidgen of graveyard earth upon it and you're done."

Easy-peasy, lemon squeezy – if you're a witch (or a warlock) and not squeamish.

Based on some of the more gruesome scenes in her latest offering, the "Mexican Gothic" and " Velvet Was the Night " author is not the least bit. A modicum of blood, a smattering of gooey shapeshifting and a dollop of melty death throes all factor in this tale of generational witchery that kicks off in 1998 Massachusetts, travels to 1908 Mexico, then back to Massachusetts in 1934 and around again.

In the 1998 chapters, Minerva is a graduate student researching the work of Beatrice Tremblay at the same college the fictitious horror writer attended in 1934. The 1934 chapters evolve from Tremblay's papers, recounting the disappearance of a friend and classmate who talks to ghosts and creates spirit paintings.

Minerva's great-grandmother Alba is the subject of the 1908 chapters, where she's a headstrong teen who covets the best things in life but not the kind a farm offers, especially a farm that seemed to have attracted bad luck after her father died and her brother took over running it.

When her handsome and glamorous uncle arrives, Alba happily embraces the possibility of getting out from under the day-to-day domestic dreariness of farm life. He offers escape, but then a disappearance changes everything, forcing Alba to confront the curse that has befallen her family – and the price she will have to pay to lift it.

A disappearance unravels Minerva's life, too. A student under her supervision as a resident assistant has left behind possessions after seemingly dropping out before summer break starts. Then strange things start to happen, echoing Alba's experience and Beatrice's.

With three timelines to juggle, Moreno-Garcia is careful with plotting – maybe too much so – leaving "The Bewitching" feeling oddly slight and slack. The pace is slow until the end when the parallel stories begin to illuminate aspects of each other, but by then it's almost too late.

In the intervening pages, much is made of characters feeling like they are being watched or followed. Eerie lights and noises not-of-this-earth are trotted out in the middle of the night. Shadowy and menacing woods surround paths that seem to change as they are traversed. And lots and lots of portents of something bad about to happen are felt as characters awaken or start their days.

What does happen – bad or otherwise – isn't anything you wouldn't expect or figure out, and despite the gory bits, "The Bewitching" isn't scary. Add it all up and you have a serviceable enough story that doesn't bear up under the weight of its structure. In other words, this tale of witches isn't that – dare I say it? Oh, yes! – bewitching.

AUTOMOTIVE

A worker polishes the surface of a BYD car during the Shanghai auto show on April 23.
Ng Han Guan / AP

Some fear Chinese automakers' playbook is existential threat to U.S. auto industry

By BREANA NOBLE
The Detroit News (TNS)

DETROIT — Aggressive component-sharing efforts have contributed to lower cost structures at many Chinese automakers, and there's an increasing push for Western automakers to catch up.

The strategy stretches from internet-connected vehicle technologies and electric vehicle powertrain systems to actuators and even engines that once defined models. Automakers agree to use common specifications for vehicle parts, sometimes at the behest of the government, to create economies of scale, ensure quality and offer better functionality to customers.

The effort has contributed to lower-cost and technologically advanced vehicles from China that people like Ford Motor Co. CEO Jim Farley have called an existential threat to the U.S. auto industry.

"We have to beat (Chinese EV giant) BYD, and we're not going to do it with cheaper batteries," Farley said last week during a panel at the Reindustrialize summit in Detroit. "We're going to have to do that with smarter engineering and better supply chain and manufacturing."

A key part of that, said Terry Woychowski, president of automotive at Caresoft Global Technologies Inc., a benchmarking consulting firm, is common parts between brands and automakers.

"To compete from a cost perspective and time perspective, there needs to be much more sharing of components," he said at the company's vehicle tear-down facility in Livonia.

He gave an example: Three automakers go to a supplier for a windshield wiper motor, each providing several thousand specifications for the parts. The supplier agrees to make the individual part for 100,000 vehicles for each company. In contrast, Chinese brands are increasingly agreeing on a list of requirements for a supplier to produce one part many times over.

"If you could all get together and say, 'OK, we took 8,000 requirements (each), and we made it 4,000, and we've all agreed – boom. Can you make that for all of us?' You say, 'Yeah, 300,000 at scale,'" Woychowski said. "We all need a motor to do this, but we all think we're smarter than anyone else, and that our smartness is what makes us a better product.

"Who would know?" he continued. "Who would care? Nobody. It's got to work. But we fixate on those things because we rely on 100 years of experience. We rely on our specs. We rely on the way we specify a product."

As a result, Chinese automakers take advantage of greater economies of scale and introduce product faster compared to U.S. companies for a part of the vehicle that probably won't make or break a sale, Woychowski said.

Meanwhile, some automakers in China adopting a common structural design have reduced their bill of materials costs by 5-10 percent, said Sharath Reddy, senior vice president of research and development at Magna International Inc. Standardization also has been key to unlocking product development timelines of less than two years and driving reliability and quality benefits from tested designs built at scale.

Reconciling different engineering philosophies, protecting intellectual property and balancing standardization with the need for differentiation, however, can be a challenge, Reddy said. Additionally, legacy companies work with processes and specifications that have been put in place over decades.

"For them, adopting standardization can take years," Reddy said in an email, "especially as it needs to align with sourcing cycles."

That's less of a challenge for the startups and new brands working from the ground up in China, he added. Additionally, the role of government and the work of organizations like the China Automotive Technology and Research Center and China Society of Automotive Engineers have contributed to accelerating adoption.

For example, the government's standardization of the hardware interface and communication protocols for charging ports for new-energy vehicles, including EVs and plug-in hybrids, allows drivers to use any public or private charging station. That access has helped EV adoption, whereas it's struggled in the United States, where automakers traditionally have used a different charging port from Tesla Inc.

"In North America and Europe, there isn't the same level of centralized collaboration. OEMs tend to operate more independently, which makes broad standardization harder to achieve," Reddy wrote. "That said, we're seeing signs of change. With rising cost pressures and increased competition – especially from Chinese OEMs – some global automakers are beginning to revisit how they approach standardization."

The most effective use of this approach is sharing components that aren't tied to a brand's identity or for areas where customers don't interact with the vehicle, such as structural parts, seat frame closures, actuators and certain electronic modules, Reddy said. More challenging areas are lighting, exteriors, interiors, powertrains, advanced driver assistance systems and infotainment.

"These areas often define the user experience and brand identity," he said, "so OEMs typically want more control and differentiation there."

Shifting consumer expectations

The line for what parts are important for differentiation is shifting, experts said. As the lifespans of gas- and diesel-powered vehicles extend amid a bumpier transition to EVs, automakers are pressed on where to invest. Plus, newer technologies like the interior's digital cockpit experience are increasingly becoming a way for models and brands to separate themselves from the competition.

Bill Russo, CEO of consulting and investment platform Automobility Ltd. in Shanghai, said "the foreign brands have had to rethink, because the whole pricing strategy and the whole content strategy has always been pegged around brands that are defined and differentiated based on their driving performance. It's not about that in the 21st century."

More people in China ride than drive, which means they are looking for a vehicle space to live in and enjoy, he explained. The bragging right of the car, Russo said, isn't about the 0-60 mph acceleration.

"When the transition happens to EV, it goes from an analog to more of a digital measure of technology differentiation," he said. "It's not that I-get-the-good-stuff-if-I buy-the-bigger-engine way of thinking about product planning. I get the good stuff or I opt in for more intelligence, more experience, more comfort, more cabin comfort."

As a result, even engines are increasingly becoming an area of commonality. Horse Powertrain Ltd. is a joint venture between China-based Volvo parent Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co. and French automaker Renault SA that produces engines, transmissions and other powertrain parts, including for hybrids. Horse also said publicly that it's supplying engines for Mercedes-Benz and other brands.

With 17 plants and five research and development centers on three continents, Horse now has its eyes set on expanding into North America, CEO Matias Giannini said on a recent visit to Detroit.

Traditionally, engines were a part of the DNA of a brand or model. Although that still might be true for performance-oriented vehicles, it may not be as much of a priority for other offerings, creating opportunity for economies of scale, Giannini said.

Collaboration may be a move to save on costs to fill out a company's portfolio for ICE and hybrid vehicles when capital is spread thin investing in EVs and other advanced technologies that automakers see is their future, Giannini said.

"By 2040, 50 percent of vehicle sales still will not be EVs," he said. "A lot of OEMs had given up (on investing in ICE), and they're realizing there is more than one road to net zero (carbon emissions). We offer solutions to close gaps, as companies realize they need to have more hybrids, and the biggest question is: What is the most efficient way? We can help them get the volume they need."

Giannini said cost savings depend on whether an automaker uses an off-the-shelf product or develops something with Horse. The manufacturer makes 8 million engines and transmissions per year and has $17 billion (15 billion euro) annual revenue outlook.

What the industry says

General Motors Co. had said it's going "all in on EVs," only to reverse that decision by announcing plans to launch plug-in hybrids in 2027 in North America. A representative for the Detroit automaker declined to comment on shared component efforts, citing competitive reasons. GM has partnered with Hyundai Motor Co. on vehicle development, supply chain and clean-energy technology, with GM CEO Mary Barra in recent months teasing that more information on that collaboration will be coming soon.

In a statement, Stellantis NV – parent of Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep and Ram – shared that the automaker isn't a part of any external or industrywide standardization effort, but that it uses collaboration and scale across its 14 brands globally.

Ford Motor Co. spokesperson Mike Levine pointed to the Dearborn automaker's partnership with Volkswagen AG that shares platforms and plants. For example, the VW Amarok truck is based on the Ford Ranger pickup, and both are built at a Ford plant in South Africa. Ford and GM have also developed together nine- and 10-speed transmissions.

Ford also referred The Detroit News to the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, which didn't respond to a request for comment.

German supplier Robert Bosch GmbH seeks standardization of products within its portfolio to save on costs, though automakers define their individual specifications, spokesperson Tim Wieland said in a statement.

Japanese supplier Denso Corp. spokesperson Andrew Rickerman said in a statement that standardization is an area the company is always evaluating. Denso leverages a "core and customize approach" when co-developing products with customers in which it presents a core product that can be altered for the unique applications and requirements of individual customers and the regions in which they operate.

"This approach allows us to produce dependable products," Rickerman said, "that still offer opportunities to innovate for consumer value, helping us make continual advancements in traditional and new product areas."

SAE International in the United States works with stakeholders to develop standards in the automotive and aerospace industries. The organization's standards are voluntary, though it does provide information to governments developing regulations when requested.

Regarding China, "they have certain benefits that we may not recognize as easily in a free market society where their market is somewhat constrained to a certain degree," Christian Thiele, SAE's senior director of ground vehicle standards, said about government support and subsidies in China for standardization.

But industry collaboration in the United States to improve safety, health and other benefits for customers has been ongoing for decades. ADAS, driver monitoring systems and sustainability are major topics today Thiele said. SAE reviews existing standards every five years, though some areas that represent rapidly changing technologies, like those around the North American Charging Standard, are discussed more frequently.

"Getting 125 engineers in the room, you might think sometimes it's efficient, but it doesn't get that efficient, because now you have a lot of strong-willed individuals with their opinions," Thiele said. "But what you're doing at the end of the day is you're delivering the best product there is."

And even in these discussions, Chinese competitors are participating as they look to expand into the U.S. market, Thiele said.

"You may not get a complete vehicle on four wheels from BYD next week," he said, "but eventually that will happen."

U.S. has long wanted to sell more cars in Asia

DO ASIAN CONSUMERS WANT THEM?

By MAX KIM
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

In the early 2000s, an observant driver might have noticed an unusual sight on South Korean streets: Some of the police cars were American-made Ford Tauruses.

Although South Korean patrol cars were normally supplied locally by Hyundai or Kia, the Tauruses were there as a goodwill gesture from the South Korean government, which bought 100 of them in 2002 to mollify American automakers and political leaders upset about the lopsided reality of the automotive trade: South Korean cars sold to U.S. consumers then were subject to a 2.5 percent tariff rate, but American cars were hit with 8 percent – and faced a host of complex regulatory hurdles to boot.

As a result, in 2000, 570,000 South Korean cars were imported by the U.S., while just 2,500 were shipped in the other direction.

Thanks to a 2012 free-trade agreement, neither country levied a tariff on the other's cars for nearly a decade. But the one-sided flow hasn't changed. Last year, South Korea exported 1.5 million cars to the U.S. to the tune of $37.4 billion, but South Koreans bought just about 47,000 vehicles worth $2.1 billion from the U.S.

Righting this disparity, as well as similar imbalances with countries such as Japan, has been a focal point in President Trump's ongoing trade war.

"Perhaps worst of all are the non-monetary restrictions imposed by South Korea, Japan and very many other nations," Trump said as he announced his 25 percent tariffs on all foreign-made automobiles in April.

He isn't the first president to blame unfair trade relationships for America's lagging car exports. President Obama, during his time in office, made removing trade barriers such as regulatory hurdles a centerpiece of his agenda to boost American exports.

But in Asia, analysts and consumers tell a different story, which they have been telling for years: They're just not that into American cars – and neither government campaigning nor increased market access is likely to change that.

Leon Cheng, an automotive expert at Singapore-based consulting firm YCP, puts it this way: "The deeper issue is product fit, not paperwork."

In the U.S., cars have been getting bigger, more expensive and more polluting in the last several decades – all the things that make for a tough sell to Asian consumers.

At first glance, Vietnam may appear to be one Asian market where American cars are due for a boost under Trump's trade regime.

Under the trade deal reached by the two countries this month, the Trump administration agreed to cut the previously announced 46 percent tariff rate against Vietnam to 20 percent, securing in return "preferential market access for U.S. goods, including large-engine cars."

American-made sport utility vehicles, "which do so well in the United States, will be a wonderful addition to the various product lines within Vietnam," Trump said.

Although the fine print of the agreement is yet to be finalized, vehicles in this category are expected to be granted a 0 percent import duty – a significant drop from the 70 percent rate they faced before.

More than 340,000 passenger vehicles were sold in Vietnam last year – a 12.6 percent increase from the previous year – and part of that is the growing appetite for both bigger and foreign cars.

Even so, Cheng doubts that American SUVs will be flying off dealership floors in a country where roads are congested with motorbikes, and the average monthly income is around $300.

"Vietnam's car market looks booming in headline numbers, but it is still tiny on a per-capita basis. Only about 9 percent of households own a car, and almost 90 percent rely primarily on two-wheelers [like motorcycles and mopeds]," he said. "Within that small car-owning slice, shoppers gravitate to what fits narrow city streets, tight parking bays and family budgets: Thai-built Toyota Fortuners, Korean Hyundai Santa Fes, or hometown hero VinFast's mid-priced EV crossovers. U.S. nameplates are curiosities."

And other obstacles remain, such as a valued-added tax or a 50%-to-60 percent special consumption tax applied to all bigger engines, so SUVs shipped from the U.S. are a poor sell.

"The Explorer or Tahoe that cost roughly US$82,000 on the showroom floor last spring may fall to the low 60s," Cheng said. "Cheaper, but still a luxury purchase in Vietnam's price-sensitive market."

In Japan, which has a well-developed car culture, there are other barriers.

Despite Trump's accusations of unfairness, Japan has in fact kept tariffs on American cars at zero since 1978 in contrast to the U.S.' 2.5 percent, and now, 25 percent. But several nontariff trade barriers exist, such as different electric-vehicle charging standards that in effect disadvantage American cars, or a requirement that all cars be equipped with an automatic emergency braking system.

Experts say the deeper issue is that Japanese consumer tastes, which have long favored compact cars suited for denser urban environments, are poorly reflected in American automakers' bulkier product lines.

"Many people say that (American cars) don't fit in parking lots or 'are difficult to handle on narrow roads,'" said Felipe Munoz, an analyst at automotive research firm JATO Dynamics. "American cars are often perceived as 'hobby cars' or 'cars for a niche audience.'"

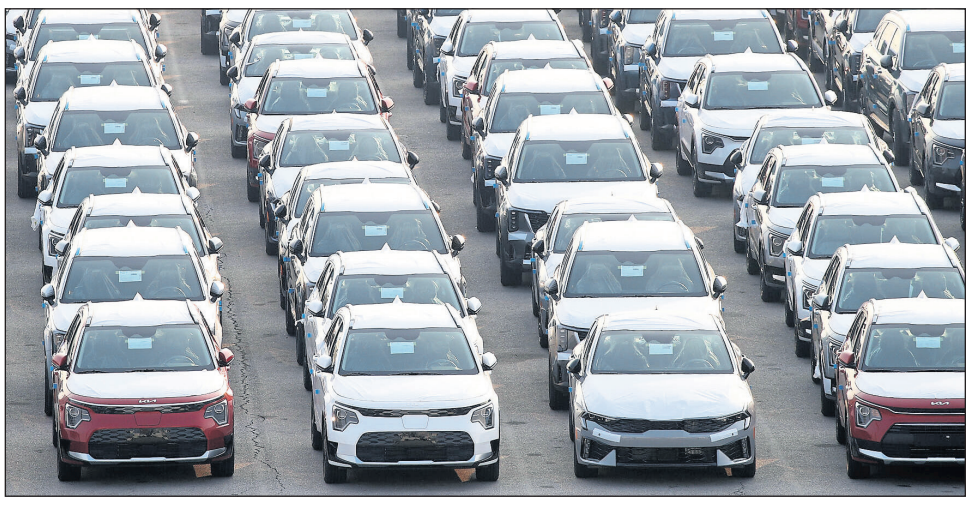
In order to register new vehicles, Japanese drivers are required to obtain verification that they have access to an adequate parking space from the police. But with spaces much smaller compared with those in the U.S., about 40 percent of the Japanese automobile market is held by the kei car, a type of minicar unique to the country that the Japanese government has also promoted with tax benefits.

This, along with strong brand loyalty for domestic players, has led to foreign cars making up less than 10 percent of the Japanese auto market, with German manufacturers taking the lion's share of that slice. Last year, only 0.3 percent – or around 16,000 – of all car sales were from American brands, according to the Japan Automobile Importers Assn.

Ultimately, the biggest source of U.S. automakers' woes in Japan, according to Takeshi Miyao, a Tokyo-based auto analyst, is failing to adapt to local consumers.

Although European automakers such as Mercedes, for example, have been proactive in making adjustments like offering their cars in right-hand drive – the standard in Japan – American competitors have historically been reluctant to do so.

"The infrastructure in Japan cannot be adjusted," Miyao said. "U.S. carmakers do not have the car variations suited to the Japanese market, and they haven't put much effort into marketing. On the other hand, German carmakers put in very hard work into the Japanese market. For example, Mercedes-Benz Japan was planning a car that would sell in the Japanese market in more than 15 years."



Chung Sung-Jun / Getty Images / TNS

Vehicles produced by South Korean automaker Kia Motors are lined up ready to be shipped at the company's shipping yard at the Port of Pyeongtaek on April 3 in Pyeongtaek, South Korea.

"Even if all the nontariff barriers to foreign automobiles in Japan were abolished, U.S. cars still wouldn't be popular," he added.

The situation is similarly dim in South Korea, despite the fact that there are fewer obstacles to American cars than in Japan.

"There aren't many trade barriers – tariff or nontariff – left to speak of," said Lee Hang-koo, a researcher at Korea Automotive Technology Institute. "But U.S. automakers haven't put in much effort at all in terms of marketing or appealing to South Korean consumers. Instead they keep shifting the blame to unfair trade practices."

The Free Trade Agreement signed by former President George W. Bush in 2007, which went into effect five years later, has kept cars tariff-free for both sides since 2016. And subsequent renegotiations of that agreement have eased the majority of regulatory barriers that remained, such as rules for safety or emissions testing.

Under the latest terms, renegotiated during Trump's first term, up to 50,000 American-made vehicles can be imported into South Korea without undergoing additional local safety testing. These rules have been applied liberally, with South Korean regulators approving American cars with red brake lights despite criticisms that they are confusing to local drivers accustomed to amber ones, and allowing certain Tesla models on the roads even though they do not meet local standards for emergency escape systems.

But American automakers have struggled to make the most of this exemption. Last year, they sold just over 40,000 units in the country – about 15 percent of the overall foreign car market, according to data from the Korea Automobile Importers and Distributors Assn. And even then, more than half of those were Teslas.

Although American business representatives have complained about South Korea's broader emissions standards, which are stricter than those in the U.S., Lee points out that these aren't easy concessions to make: A Constitutional Court ruling last year found South Korea's current climate targets were inadequate, meaning emissions standards probably will have even less wiggle room going forward.

"The problem is that with the exception of Tesla, American car companies keep trying to export gas guzzlers that South Koreans won't buy when they should be trying to sell more electric vehicles," Lee said.

For South Korean consumers sensitive about the country's high gas prices, fuel economy is oftentimes the biggest dealbreaker – even if they feel otherwise favorable toward American cars.

"American cars have a unique appeal, they have a clear design philosophy and rich history compared to South Korean cars, which feel a bit too bland for me," said Hong Seung-ki, a 38-year-old musician living in Seoul.

Hong drove a gun-metal gray Ford Mustang, which he loved, for years. Now, after a brief switch to a Hyundai, he rides a motorbike.

"I'd only buy another American car if I were rich. Right now, I don't think I could afford to have one as a daily driver," he said. "Compared to domestic cars in a similar price range, they just don't have as many features and there's just too big of a cost differential when it comes to general maintenance like aftermarket service."

As in Japan, there is the strong impression that American car companies – even those with a production base in the country – have come to see the South Korean market as an afterthought.

Despite demands from their local labor union to shore up their thinning service center network and target the local market more aggressively by shifting EV production to their two South Korea plants, GM Korea exports nearly over 90 percent of the Chevy Trax and Trailblazer vehicles it produces here overseas, with most going to U.S. consumers.

To many, it's a signal that American car companies have largely thrown in the towel.

Still, there is a smattering of success stories that may offer hints as to how American automakers, losing the fuel economy battle to domestic competitors and the prestige market to European ones, might survive in Asia.

In Japan, it has been the surging popularity of Jeep, which has been praised for adapting to local specifications with right-hand drive options and size adjustments. In Vietnam, it is the Ford Ranger, which has dominated the pickup segment and, despite being built in Thailand, is a testament that American designs can still land with the right niche.

In South Korea, the Ford Taurus found some modest success following the government's promotional push in the early 2000s. But Lee would point to another defining import of that era: the PT Cruiser, Chrysler's much-mocked oddity that unexpectedly won a cult following in the country.

"It was a strange-looking car with a roly-poly exterior, but it had a lot of space inside and there was nothing in South Korea that could compete with it in its segment," he said. "Somehow, it just worked."

AUTO REVIEW

The 2025 Toyota 4Runner may be new, but remains familiar

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

For the first time in 15 years, there's a new Toyota 4Runner. And while the 2025 edition may be new, it remains what it's always been: a steel box standing on its toes with the long-term survival instincts of Cher.

Having hibernated without a significant change since the debut of the Apple iPad, the 2025 Toyota 4Runner no longer seems as if it were smuggled out of a 2010 Cabela's catalog. Now boxier and angrier, it has a more youthful sporting vibe than the similarly sized Land Cruiser. For its sixth generation, its new look is evolutionary not revolutionary, something that will no doubt please the 4Runner faithful, who remain loyal to this rig like the uncle who insists on wearing socks with sandals because it's comfortable.

Under the refreshed wardrobe lies the underpinnings of the recently revised Toyota Tacoma pickup, with which it shares its interior décor. It boasts a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, although the 8-inch infotainment touchscreen can be replaced with a 14-inch display. The larger screen is welcome, but the smaller one works well enough. Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity, a plethora of USB-C ports, and a digital key come standard. A wireless smartphone charging pad is optional.

The driver sits up high, but the sitting-on-the-floor feel remains intact. The 4Runner's extreme ground clearance, short cabin height and narrow windshield hinder the view off-road. It's not helped by cameras that shut off at 5 mph, not 20 mph as in competitors. Yet they come on constantly in city and suburban driving when you don't need them.

With three rows of seats, there's room for adults in the first two rows, and room for those you despise in the third row. The seats are firm and water-resistant, perfect in case you spill your Mountain Dew. The materials seem durable and the air-conditioning works well. The 4Runner's natural disposition is not one that's lavishly equipped with options. Certainly the SR5, a Baja-style-road rat with a lack of pretense, seems far more honest than other 4Runner models' attempted haughtiness.

The 2025 Toyota 4Runner is powered by the "I-Force" 2.4-liter turbo offering 278 horsepower and 317 pound-feet of torque. It's standard on the SR5, TRD Sport, TRD Sport Premium and available on the TRD Off-Road, TRD Off-Road Premium and Limited. Standard on the TRD Pro, Trailhunter and Platinum trims and available on TRD Off-Road, TRD Off-Road Premium and Limited grades is the "I-Force Max" hybrid, a name that sounds like an energy drink for the oblivious. Its 2.4-liter turbo/electric motor powertrain generates 326 horsepower and 465 pound-feet of torque. Rear-wheel drive is standard, Full-time four-wheel drive is available with a two-speed transfer case with high and low range. Depending on model, there's an array of off-road gear to make exploring nearby verdant valleys easy. And it can yank 6,000 pounds of your favorite plaything.

Hit the highway and you'll find the ride is harshest on the SR5, with upper trims being far smoother. Neither is as composed as the Land Cruiser. Nonetheless, off-road is where the 4Runner excels. Crawl mode, locking diffs, a disconnecting sway bar – you'll venture where Jeeps fear to tread and Subaru owners would bypass, lest they get dirty. Opting for the base engine is certainly fine, as power seems up to the task of tugging this truck wherever you want it to run, off-road or on. But the hybrid adds refinement along with the extra power and is fairly quiet. And Toyota stuffed it with all the modern annoying driver aids you'd expect in an effort to save your life, even if you're a fool.

The 2025 Toyota 4Runner is a celebration of the pig-headed and the well-prepared. Its sturdiness, utility and impossibly high ride height will ensure its longevity that will outlast your career, your 401(k) and possibly even your marriage. Surely, it's the only SUV that will continue to function long after the rest of civilization does not. Just ask Cher.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

2025 Toyota 4Runner

Base price: $40,770

Powertrain: Turbocharged 2.4-liter gas/electric hybrid

Horsepower/Torque: 326/465 pound-feet

EPA rating (combined city/highway): 23 mpg

Fuel required: Regular unleaded

Length/Width/Height: 19$^{5}/_{8}$0/75.5 inches

Ground clearance: 8.8 inches

Payload: 1,135 pounds

Cargo capacity: 12-84 cubic feet

Towing capacity: 6,000 pounds

Toyota / TNS

TECHNOLOGY

2025's best pressure washers

By CNET.COM (TNS)

Put water under pressure and it can clean just about anything. That's what makes pressure washers so effective: They combine the dirt-lifting power of a good scrub with the flow of a garden hose.

The water in your pipes is at a pressure of less than 100 pounds per square inch, but these pressure washers increase this by up to 30 times, equivalent to the water pressure at 2,000 feet underwater. When that water hits the target, that energy is transferred, lifting anything on the surface, such as the dirt on your car, the grunge on your siding or the mildew on your deck.

We've spent weeks testing a variety of pressure washers on different surfaces, including wood, metal, brick and more to help you find the best one for your needs. The following are three of CNET's top picks, with the whole list available on our site for your perusal.

The following CNET staff contributed to this story: CNET contributor Richard Baguley and Copy Editor Jim Hoffman. For more reviews of personal technology products, please visit www.cnet.com.

All photos by Richard Baguley / CNET / TNS.

Karcher K1800PS Cube

Best overall and best affordable

CNET TAKE: Like the proverbial bowl of porridge, the Karcher K1800PS is just about right. It has enough power, enough options and is great for most tasks. The cables, hose, wand and nozzles are stored on the washer itself, so they're less likely to get lost. This also has a handle to carry the entire package, which weighs in at a portable 9 pounds.

The 20-foot hose is long enough to get around the car. It comes with three nozzles: You get a 15-degree spray for general cleaning and a turbo nozzle that produces a more intense rotating single spray pattern with a cone angle of approximately 10 degrees. There's also a soap nozzle designed to create a nice, soapy, sudsy mix from the soap reservoir. Karcher warns that using cleaners containing bleach or acid will void the warranty; it recommends using its detergents exclusively.

The wand is comfortable to use, with a lockout latch that operates like a reverse gas pump: The latch stops the throttle from engaging, rather than keeping it open.

DeWalt 20V MAX 550 PSI Cordless Power Cleaner Kit

Best for home clean-ups and general cleaning

CNET TAKE: The DeWalt 20V MAX 550 PSI Cordless Power Cleaner Kit is the most powerful of the handheld cleaners we tested, making it ideal for professionals, home refurbishers and serious DIY enthusiasts.

Imagine a DeWalt power drill that's been getting into bodybuilding, and you have the 20V Max power cleaner kit. It resembles an oversized power tool, complete with a 20V Max battery under the handle and the same black and orange design as other DeWalt tools. It's a good look, and this pressure washer has the brawn to back it up, producing a healthy 550 PSI of pressure that makes for effective general cleaning and dirt-disturbing tasks.

Four nozzles (15 degrees, 25 degrees, 40 degrees and turbo) are included, which can all be stored on top of the power washer. Swapping them out is easy; just pull back on the brass ring around the base of the nozzle and pull it out, then push the replacement in place.

DeWalt DWPW3000 Max Pressure Washer

Best for big cleaning jobs

CNET TAKE: The DWPW3000 is a large, powerful power washer that can handle massive cleaning jobs while remaining portable and easy to store. With 3,000 PSI of water pressure and four included nozzles, it handled all the jobs I tested it on without strain, from washing the car to blasting ground-in dirt from rugged concrete blocks.

The entire setup fits into a compact, portable package: The handle, wands and nozzles are stored in a lidded compartment on top, the power cable is wrapped around plastic lugs on the bottom, and the hose and foam cannon are positioned on top, secured by a retaining clip. That means you aren't going to leave things behind or lose them: it's all stored together.

Additionally, the wheels and suitcase-type fold-out handle make it easy to move over flat surfaces. It's a bit heavy to lug over rough surfaces, though, at 36 pounds. But the roll cage design makes it easy to pick up.

Yes, you can trust Geek Squad

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

This week, a reader writes, "I have a Best Buy/Geek Squad account and in the years past I have allowed their techs to take over my PC remotely to clean it up so that it runs faster. Do you think I am taking any kind of risk, e.g., stolen account data, when I do this?"

This is a good question, and any time someone outside your home or family accesses your computer, you are right to question what's going on.

Readers frequently ask me for a recommendation for in-person tech help, but I don't make those types of recommendations. I don't personally know any independent desktop support people, and I just don't feel comfortable sending readers to someone I don't know to potentially come into their homes.

I know a lot of people who rely on their children or even grandchildren to help with their tech issues. Asking friends or family for a recommendation is also a way to go.

I have sent plenty of people to Geek Squad, which is a computer support option available through Best Buy stores nationwide. They offer in-store service as well as remote support options, including remotely controlling your system to fix things. They offer ongoing support plans or individual service incident options.

I have not personally used Geek Squad, but I have recommended them to people who need tech help. I know plenty of people who have used them, and they generally have nice things to say about them.

My first choice would probably be to take my PC to the closest Best Buy for repair, but I understand proximity to a store or your individual transportation situation may necessitate using remote control for a troubleshooting session.

What you really want to be sure of is that you make the contact with Geek Squad and not the other way around.

Geek Squad will never reach out to you. I've seen situations where a reader will get a text or phone call telling them a problem has been traced back to their specific computer and they'd offer to help them fix the issue remotely. Some of these scammers will tell you they are from Geek Squad.

The bottom line is if you do have a real computer problem, it's OK to call Geek Squad. I realize this sounds like an ad, but it is not.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

Best Buy / TNS

Geek Squad is a computer support option available through Best Buy stores nationwide. They offer in-store service as well as remote support options, including remotely controlling your system to fix things. They offer ongoing support plans or individual service incident options.

GADGETS

Wi-Fi *wherever you go*

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

With the **TravlFi JourneyGo 4G LTE Hotspot**, you'll have Wi-Fi wherever you go.

The dark gray, pocket-sized (3.46 inches by 0.93 inches deep) travel-ready JourneyGo 4G LTE Hotspot ensures you have a secure internet connection at vacation destinations. It is designed to work virtually anywhere in the U.S., including on the road in an RV, in hotels, at beaches and almost anywhere else.

On the fly, it automatically switches to the strongest network signal available among many of the largest cellular carriers in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The main difference between using JourneyGo and using Wi-Fi on your cellular phone is that your cellphone only connects to your provider. TravlFi connects to the best signal in your area among multiple different cellular networks.

TravlFi lists typical download speeds as 10 to 35 Mbps, with a high of 150 Mbps, which is always dependent on the location. The maximum upload speed is 50 Mbps. It has an IP64 rating, so it's dust-tight and can withstand water splashes.

It is rated to work for up to 16 hours before a USB-C charge is needed for the 4,700 mAh polymer lithium battery. The battery life will vary depending on the number of devices connected, which is up to 10.

No SIM card is required, and a wide variety of data plans are available, including an unlimited option. Best of all, there are no contracts or prepaid data plans. Instead, you prepay on a month-to-month basis depending on your data usage needs and travel schedule, ensuring you're not paying for a data plan not being used for long periods.

The JourneyGo 4G LTE Hotspot is $199, and the TravlFi JourneyGo Hotspot Carrying Case is $20. Data plans range from 2GB of data for $19 to unlimited data for $99, which is ideal for 4K streaming, remote work and gaming.

A 5G hotspot from TravlFi is expected to be released later this year.

https://travlfi.com

The JourneyGo 4G LTE Hotspot is $199, and the TravlFi JourneyGo Hotspot Carrying Case is $20. Data plans range from 2GB of data for $19 to unlimited data for $99, which is ideal for 4K streaming, remote work, and gaming.

Chris Bacarella / TravlFi / TNS

Acefast's Acefit Pro true wireless earbuds are well-rounded with an open-ear design.

Open-ear earbuds are gaining popularity, but are relatively unknown to many. What makes them unique is that they don't sit in your ears. Instead, they sit outside your ear canal, allowing you to hear both the music and your surroundings. The Acefit Pro features ear hooks for a secure fit and delivers music with clear, crisp sound.

The setup and use are the same as regular TW earbuds; pair them (Bluetooth 5.4) and play. What's new and different is the Acefit Pro's have Night Safety Mode, technology consisting of a matrix of 40 breathing lights around the ear area. The technology is a visual cue designed to enhance user safety during low-light conditions, thereby making the user more visible to others. The Acefast app offers eight settings to control them.

Open-ear earbuds can be a different experience if you've never used them, but the adjustment is quick. The Acefit Pros are lightweight due to their ear hook design. They are as thin as 0.7 mm and constructed from aviation-grade titanium wire, allowing them to fit all ear shapes and sizes. In addition to the great sound, they are comfortable.

The high-quality sound comes from a three-magnetic super-linear speaker, touted by AceFast as the first compact speaker on the market with a maximum high amplitude of 0.5 mm. The custom-built speakers feature proprietary technology to deliver clear sound with minimal distortion.

The charging case features an LED floating digital display that shows the power level. With the case charging, you'll get up to 25 hours of listening time, with each charge lasting up to 6 hours at 60 percent volume. They have an IP54 dustproof and waterproof rating, and you can turn each earbud on and off independently.

https://acefast.com/catalog/audio/tws-earbuds-fa001-acefit-pro $115.99, available in color choices of rime grey, olive green, windy purple, and cherry blossom

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

Acefast's Acefit Pro true wireless earbuds are well-rounded with an open-ear design. What makes them unique is that they don't sit in your ears. Instead, they sit outside your ear canal, allowing you to hear both the music and your surroundings. The Acefit Pro features ear hooks for a secure fit and delivers music with clear, crisp sound. They are as thin as 0.7 mm and constructed from aviation-grade titanium wire, allowing them to fit all ear shapes and sizes.

Acefast / TNS

HOME & GARDEN

DESIGN RECIPES

THE BEAUTY OF BLUE

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Blue is the new "it" color that can be dressed up or dressed down. Just as elegant as black, but not as harsh, blue is an elegant and attractive choice for anyone looking to bring a sense of luxury into the home.

Looking for ways to infuse blue into your home? Here are some top design tips.

■ Infuse texture, whether through textiles or accessories.

■ Layer tints, tones and shades of blue. Layering color is a popular designer hack.

■ Incorporate a sense of contrast. Pairing a deep, rich indigo with light colors such as white, taupe and light gray results in a gorgeous sense of contrast.

■ Use blue as small "pops of color" to sprinkle color in various parts of your home.

■ Use blue as a foundational color for which to build a color palette.

■ Pair blue with warm tones. Blue is a cool tone.

■ Use blue in areas where you would normally use black. Dark blue is often interchangeable with black.

■ Look for an inspirational design piece to help "anchor" a room.

■ Consider natural elements to add an organic and natural element.

■ Use blue in small areas to help them feel cozy, such as bathrooms and offices. Accent walls are a great option.

Cathy Hobbs is a nationally recognized real estate stager and celebrity interior designer based in New York City. Cathy is the owner of the NYC + Hudson Valley-based interior design, home staging firm Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes and the author of the book "Home Design Recipes." www.cathyhobbs.com.

ABOVE: Artwork of various sizes with hints of blue serves as a focal point in this living space. **RIGHT:** Blue side chairs help to ground this elegant living room.

Provided photos / TNS

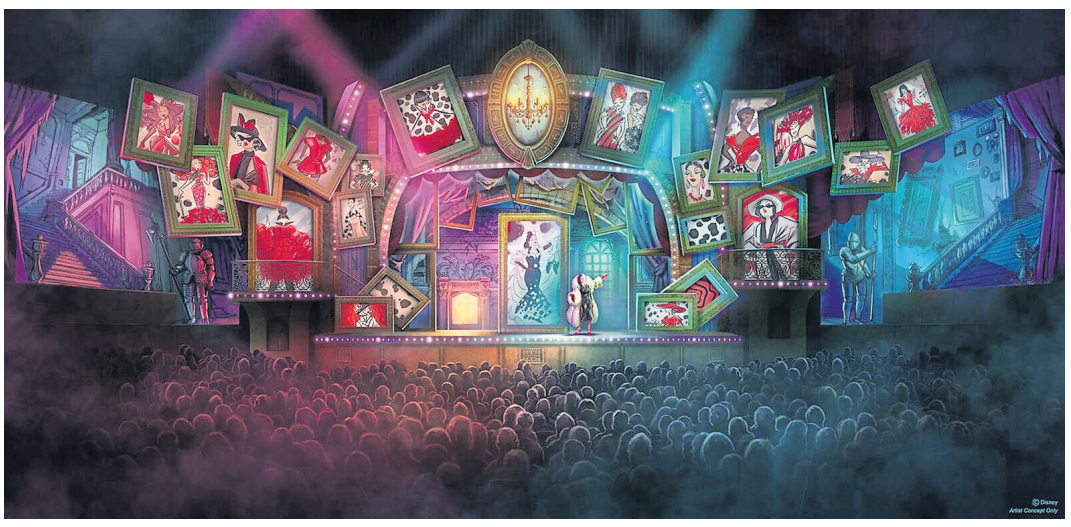
REVIEW

Dewayne Bevil / Orlando Sentinel / TNS

Ariel sits among her possessions during "The Little Mermaid – A Musical Adventure," a new stage show at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

Walt Disney Co / TNS.

"The Little Mermaid – A Musical Adventure."



Disneyland / TNS

"Disney Villains: Unfairly Ever After" is now running at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

Yay! More theme-park theater in Disney's 'Little Mermaid,' villains show

By MATTHEW J. PALM
Orlando Sentinel (TNS)

There's a theatrical renaissance taking place in our theme parks, and I am here for it.

Hot on the heels of the new stage shows at Universal Epic Universe, Walt Disney World has raised the curtain on two new productions at Disney's Hollywood Studios: "The Little Mermaid – A Musical Adventure" and "Disney Villains: Unfairly Ever After."

Both put an array of theatrical arts on display – and let's not underestimate the fact that for many children, this will be their first exposure to theater experiences.

"The Little Mermaid – A Musical Adventure" is a vastly expanded and improved version of the previous "Little Mermaid" show in that space. This feels like a true retelling, helped immensely by the simple change of introducing Prince Eric much earlier in the show. And, crucially, Eric is now portrayed by a speaking actor, so the character is far more fully realized.

The live performers are accentuated more: Ariel joins in "Under the Sea," and a new "Kiss the Girl" scene features both Ariel and Eric.

But there's a group of unseen performers contributing just as much through puppetry. "The Little Mermaid" always has featured strong puppeteering, but this version feels next-level. Watch Sebastian the crab move, or check out the bird going for a big solo in "Kiss the Girl." Ursula's eel minions, Flotsam and Jetsam, have more motion, too.

My only quibble is not directed at the performers but rather at a technical element. Animation used in the opening sequence to introduce Ariel's sisters (yes, "Daughters of Triton" now also is performed) feels out of sync with the style of everything that comes after, as if it were left over from some other version that didn't make it off the drawing board.

But on the whole, this is a huge step forward in theatricality for Ariel and her friends.

Across the park, the baddies are up to no good and pleading their case in "Disney Villains: Unfairly Ever After."

Three live performers interact with the Magic Mirror from "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" in a show that relies heavily on recorded imagery, not unlike many of today's Broadway shows. The show's venue has received a major upgrade from its previous use and looks like an actual theater.

And while Magic Mirror's patter is engaging enough and the use of technology is attention-getting, it's undoubtedly the human actors who give this show its spark.

The featured villains are Cruella de Vil, Captain Hook and Maleficent. Cruella is all manic energy, as you'd expect, with some fabulous costume changes. Maleficent oozes malice, putting her own menacing spin on Sleeping Beauty's "Once Upon a Dream."

Captain Hook is practically an old vaudeville star, singing and hoofing and drawing laughs. It's a fun role that, like the others, wouldn't have the same effect on video. Which makes it more puzzling why we see two other villains (Hades and Jafar) only on video, a bit that doesn't quite work because it can't capture the magic of live appearances.

I wonder why Disney didn't design the show so other villains could swing in, perhaps widening the casting pool but also providing a surprise for guests each time, and a reason to come back. At the show's end, the audience gets to decide which villain has been most unfairly judged; the winner at my performance was Captain Hook – no surprise with charisma like that.

The two new Disney shows follow the new stage shows "Le Cirque Arcanus" and "The Untrainable Dragon" at Epic Universe. SeaWorld Orlando also has introduced a new stage show, "Hydro Surge," which includes singers, a drummer, puppeteers, dancers, acrobats and aerial artists. This one is a limited-time offering, part of the park's "Summer Spectacular" promotion.

The road to increased park-based entertainment hasn't been 100 percent smooth. Entertainers at Universal Orlando were thrown a major curveball when a show they had spent weeks rehearsing was canceled during the pre-opening test phase of Central Florida's newest theme park. But multiple people affected by that decision have told the Sentinel that every effort was being made to shift the displaced performers into other roles – and that even more entertainment was on the way.

Let's hope that happens. Because maybe park executives are realizing that the storytelling their parks do is thanks not only to the themed architecture and rides. There's a human factor in storytelling that can only come from the theatrical power of live entertainment.

TRAVEL TIPS

Hacks to ease some of summer's biggest headaches when you fly

SEATTLE — How much money would an airline need to pay you to give up your seat? What's TSA PreCheck anyway, and is it actually worth it? If you're the unlucky traveler staring at a closed gate (that will not reopen no matter how much you beg and plead), what should you have done differently to get yourself to the door five minutes earlier?

These are just some of the many airport dilemmas that travelers face every summer. Regardless of where you're flying out of, we asked travel experts to share tips and tricks to save yourself the stress from the moment you leave your home to when you arrive at your destination. As it turns out, there's a whole laundry list of things to know.

Getting to and from the airport

A successful travel day can begin before you even arrive at Consider public transportation. In Seattle, the Link light rail has a convenient stop at Sea-Tac Airport.

If you're having someone drop you off, airport spokesperson Perry Cooper recommends thinking opposite – drop people off at the lower arrivals terminal and pick people up at departures during peak morning hours when more flights depart, and vice versa during the evening.

Skip the stress at security lines

You might have seen recent social media posts about "airport theory" – a viral trend in which people arrive at the airport often just 10-15 minutes before their gate closes, to see just how quickly they can get through their airport's security screening. If that sounds like a nightmare scenario to you – and it's definitely not what most experts recommend, which is arriving at the airport at least three hours before an international flight and one to two hours before a domestic flight – here are some tips to help you get through security without the stress.

Several screening upgrades are available at larger airports, including TSA PreCheck, CLEAR+ and ADA-friendly screening.

CLEAR+: An annual CLEAR+ membership is $209 per person (additional family members are $125 each). You can skip the pre-security line (where an airport agent checks your ID) and instead be escorted to a faster line where your fingerprints or irises will be scanned.

TSA PreCheck: An initial application will cost $77.95 and lasts five years, after which you can renew for $68.95. You'll be able to keep your shoes, belt and light outerwear on, as well as leave laptops and 3-1-1 compliant liquids in carry-on bags as you go through security. You can also bundle TSA PreCheck with a CLEAR+ membership for $209 for both – though the $131.05 for CLEAR+ only applies to the first year.

Travelers who need accessibility assistance should contact their airline before their day of travel for assistance, such as receiving a wheelchair escort to your gate.

The fine print of travel costs

Nowadays, you might find yourself paying extra for assigned seats or baggage fees. At the end of the day, you are guaranteed a seat if you have a ticket. Which seat it is might just depend on your comfort level.

"Keep in mind how much you're willing to pay for that comfort," Baskas said. "Or, would you rather spend that money at the other end (on your vacation)? I always advocate for that."

Baskas also recommends gathering up your resources – credit card reward programs, loyalty programs, etc. – before booking a flight to get the best bang for your buck. For example, if you're flying on Alaska Airlines and have its Visa Signature credit card, you're entitled to a free checked bag for you and up to six passengers.

If you're in need of a rental car at your destination, keep in mind any trade-offs between different companies. For example, renting through Turo, a peer-to-peer car-sharing service, might be cheaper than renting through companies like Hertz or Enterprise, but you may have to travel to your car pickup spot. Being flexible with your selections also helps, said Baskas, who uses Hotwire to look for rentals. Hotwire books through the major rental companies but doesn't disclose which ones appear in your search, and focuses instead on competitive pricing, she added.

Another rental car tip from Baskas: If your party can fit in a smaller car, book it. One possible side benefit: "Many (companies) don't have small cars … they'll upgrade you automatically to a larger car," she said.

Lastly, there's the question of travel insurance. Is it worth spending more money on a safety net? The answer is yes and no, according to travel consumer advocate Christopher Elliott, who writes the Travel Troubleshooter column in The Seattle Times. He recommends only getting insurance for nonrefundable parts of your trip, like hotel reservations or prepaid car rentals.

"If there's an illness or death, medical (travel insurance) is a really big deal, especially for traveling abroad because Medicare, Medicaid and your own health insurance usually will not cover you if you're overseas," Elliott said. Insurance can save you hundreds of thousands of dollars if you find yourself injured on a ski slope and have to be evacuated, he added.

Flight overbooked or canceled?

It's not an ideal situation: You've arrived at your gate, coffee and book in hand, when you receive the bad news: Your flight is overbooked and the airline makes you move, otherwise known as "involuntary denied boarding" or "bumping."

While airline bumping is legal, you may be entitled to denied boarding compensation under U.S. Department of Transportation law. If eligible, travelers usually receive DBC within 24 hours of being bumped. The amount of compensation you receive depends on the price of your ticket and whether you're on a domestic flight or international flight departing from the United States, according to the USDOT website. For example, if you are bumped off a domestic flight and delayed by more than two hours, you could receive $2,150 in compensation.

Airlines may also ask for volunteers to give up their seats, with no limit to the amount or type of compensation they offer. Make sure to talk with your travel party before you head to the airport and determine at what point you would be willing to give up your seat. When Baskas and her husband were flying back from Nashville, Tennessee, last summer, their airline offered $600 per person to be in the airport for an extra six hours. Baskas and her husband pocketed $1,200 for the trip and enjoyed exploring the airport during their wait.

And don't be afraid to "nudge" the airline for more benefits, Baskas continued. If an airline offers you $500 for a later flight, can they also put you in their lounge? Or, can they offer you more than $12 for a meal voucher, which nowadays won't get you more than a cup of coffee? "It's a negotiation," Baskas said.

It's also important to make sure you keep records of negotiations with an airline, by emailing its customer service line and receiving a claim number. "Most people think that calling the airline is the best way," Elliott said. But, if you're calling from Washington state and want to record the phone conversation, you must comply with the state's all-party consent law. "It's better to actually create a paper trail between you and the airline," he said.

If your flight is significantly delayed or canceled, here's a silver lining: A 2024 Department of Transportation rule requires U.S.-based airlines to give passengers automatic cash refunds, even if the customer doesn't ask for one. These apply to domestic flights delayed by more than three hours and international flights delayed by more than six hours. You should automatically get refunded within seven days if you paid by credit card, or 20 days if you paid by another method.

– By Nicole Pasia / The Seattle Times (TNS)

Antonio Perez / Chicago Tribune / TNS

Travelers line up to check in at Terminal 1 United Airlines in O'Hare International Airport in Chicago on May 18, 2023.